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NARRATIVES

FROM

THE OLD TESTAMENT.

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NARRATIVES

FROM

THE OLD TESTAMENT.

BY

BENJAMIN WILLS NEWTON.

LONDON

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INTRODUCTION.

THE OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS NOT EXCLUDED FROM THE CHURCH IN GLORY.

THE following Papers, written at various times, have, at the request of some of my friends, been collected and republished in their present form.

I have felt no little hesitation in doing this, chiefly because I increasingly feel the solemn responsibility incurred by commenting on the actions of God's honoured servants, and of venturing to speak of their infirmities and sins. We need, indeed, chastened and humbled souls to touch on subjects such as these: for the danger to ourselves is great. To recognise the depths of God's grace to others, without thereby encouraging our own tendencies to evil, is not easy. Nevertheless, we must remember that all things that "were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and *comfort of the Scriptures*, might have hope." May we humbly bless God for this comfort, and receive it to the strengthening of our faith, placing our own mouths in the dust.

I scarcely need say that I utterly reject the doctrine of those who exclude the Old Testament Saints from the Church in its final glory. I regard

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that doctrine as a dangerous heresy, and necessarily subversive of the Gospel of the grace of God as taught in God's holy Word. It is "a different [ἕτερον] Gospel, which is not another."

For, what is it that gives title to entrance into the Church, and all the Church's blessings? Is it not, simply and only, the value of *the Blood of the Lamb?* Is not the Church of God defined as being that Body "which He hath purchased with His own blood"? (See Acts xx. 28.) The blood was shed, and the blood was offered—offered in all its preciousness to God. It was an offering that was meritorious—infinitely meritorious, for it was the result of the voluntary obedience of One "whose goings-forth have been from old, from everlasting." The imputation, therefore, of that meritoriousness was the greatest of gifts that could be granted by God to any creature, and this it is that has been apportioned by God to every member of the family of faith, so that they might have thereby community of blessing. Accordingly, we read, "*All* things are yours, for ye are Christ's." And, again, "whom He justified, them He also glorified;" and so glorified that they are to be "conformed in glory to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren." Abraham was justified by faith: all the merits of the Holy One rested on his head; he was Christ's, and therefore had "ALL things:" he not only belonged to the family of faith, but he was the head of that family;

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and yet I am asked to believe that from the chiefest of the blessings and glories of that family he is excluded. I am asked to believe that Abraham, though redeemed, is excluded from the great result of redemption as revealed in Scripture. And what is the ground of this supposed exclusion? Abraham and the Old Testament Saints, say they, are to be excluded because they did not receive, whilst on earth, the Holy Spirit *in the same manner* as we have received it who have lived since Pentecost. Such is the doctrine of the appended passage.*

* After mentioning Abraham, Moses, David, and others, the passage goes on to state: "But all these are presented to us in God's Word as individual servants of His—not as members of a body. They were men of faith. Their devotion and obedience shine brightly on the pages of the inspired record. But there is not such a thought suggested by all that is said of them as that they were members of the body, the Church. They were quickened by the Spirit beyond all doubt. By virtue of the foreseen sacrifice of Christ they were forgiven and saved. They will all have part in the first resurrection, and partake of heavenly glory. There can be no question as to any of these things. But no one of these things, no, nor all of them together, constitute the Church. The Church shares these things, life, justification, resurrection, and heavenly glory, with the saints of Old Testament times; but what constitutes the Church is something distinct from, and beyond all these things. *It is the actual living unity with Christ and with each other of those who, since Christ's resurrection, are formed into this unity by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. Was there anything like this in Old Testament times?*"—"Plain Papers," p. 83.

In another passage of the same publication we find the

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Thus it is taught that our title to belong to the Church of God in glory does not depend on that which we are in Christ, but on that which we are in the Spirit. Our title to say, "that we are fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God," rests, according to this system, not on Christ the Saviour, but on the Spirit as given at Pentecost. Experiences wrought in us through the Spirit, not faith in Jesus, become the link that unites us to the hope of appointed glory. If this be so, we need to alter those blessed words which say, "The Church of God which He hath *purchased by His own blood:*" we should be obliged to say, the Church of God, which He hath made His Church, because of that which it learns and knows, through the Spirit. We could no longer say that *Christ* was "the Rock" on which the Church was built. We must seek some other foundation. The foundation must be found in something wrought IN us by the grace of the Spirit, and not in the external work of the Lord Jesus FOR us. Is not this virtual Popery? It is, as I have already said, a different Gospel, which is not another.

It is, no doubt, true that Abraham and the Old

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words: "Those risen and glorified saints who do not form part of the Church." ("Plain Papers.") This is just the Popish theory which gives the title of "*saint*" only to those who have lived since Christ came. It is canonical to speak of St. Paul or St. Jerome, but not so to speak of Abraham or Isaiah.

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Testament saints had not the same fulness of light, nor the same dispensational privileges as were possessed by Peter, and Paul, and John. Neither the Old Testament saints, nor even John the Baptist, who came between the Old Testament and the New, were *dispensationally* in the kingdom of Heaven as an economy on the earth. As regards dispensational position and the character of his service, the least in the kingdom of heaven was greater than John. It was the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus that introduced the kingdom of Heaven as an economy into the earth. He it was who first declared the great salvation. (See Heb. ii. 3.) Every disciple, therefore, of Jesus, as belonging to that kingdom, and able to bear testimony to its grace, was *dispensationally* greater and more privileged than John. But they whose service on earth terminated before the kingdom of heaven was dispensationally introduced on earth, are not thereforee xcluded from it as by and by manifested in glory. *Heaven is not to become a transcript of the dispensational differences of earth;* and, therefore, we read that Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, who, like John the Baptist, were not in the kingdom of heaven as an economy on the earth, will be in it when manifested in glory. "I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. viii. 11.)

I have already referred to some of the blessings

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ascribed to Abraham in the Scriptures. I will state them more fully. In the fourth of Romans we are taught that Abraham was justified by faith, and that righteousness was imputed to him without works.

In the fifth of Romans the privileges of the justified are recorded, one of which is "expectation of the glory of God." Another is "the reigning in life through one, Jesus Christ," and that, as the result of being "constituted righteous" by His obedience. These things are said to be true of the justified, of whom Abraham is one.

In the eighth of Romans we find these words: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Now, seeing that Abraham was thus called and justified, shall he not stand among the many brethren who shall be conformed to the image of Christ in glory?

In 1 Cor. xv. 20 we read: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the FIRST-FRUITS of them that have fallen asleep" (*των κεκοιμημενων*)—it is the perfect tense, and therefore emphatically includes Abraham, and all the Old

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Testament saints. If, therefore, Christ in resurrection be *their* "first-fruits" and *our* "first-fruits," is not this a pledge that we shall all rise in the likeness of the same glory? Again, in this chapter it is said of all believers, in every Dispensation, that as they have all died in Adam, so they shall all be quickened IN Christ. The word "IN" and the reference to the first Adam, show that all believers are regarded as being one with the last Adam, as their new federal head. It is a text that proves that there is no redemption that does not result in living union with the person of the Redeemer. Abraham has borne the image of the earthly Adam, he shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

In the Old Testament, also, we find a remarkable passage referring to the resurrection of the dead saints of Israel at the time of Israel's conversion and restoration to the favour of God. "Thy [Israel is addressed]—thy dead shall live, my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of light (אוֹרוֹת), and the earth shall cast out her mighty ones." (Is. xxvi. 19).* Abraham and the Old Testament

* This is an interesting passage, and is of itself sufficient to show that the Old Testament saints are part of the mystical body of Christ; for how else could they be described as "His dead body"? All the dead saints of Israel, together with all others of the family of faith that have fallen asleep in Jesus, (οἱ κεκοιμημενοι) shall rise in "the first resurrection." As soon as the Trumpet that announces the descent of the Lord into the air shall sound, the dead saints shall rise. It will

saints are here described as belonging to Christ's mystical body now dead; but then, as His dead body, they shall arise in glory. It is in another form a declaration of the same truth as is declared in the passage just quoted from 1 Cor. xv., where we are taught that all who have fallen asleep in Christ shall rise in the likeness of His glory.

In the Galatians, where we who live in this Pentecostal Dispensation are taught respecting our

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be a moment of utter darkness—rayless darkness; for all the natural sources of light will have been withdrawn. Yet in a moment, suddenly, the earth shall be radiant with the brightness of unearthly glory, for the bodies of myriads of saints shall start from their graves glorified in the likeness of the glory of their Lord. This shall be one of the tokens that the day of Israel's restoration has come. (*See* Romans xi. 15.) Therefore we read "Thy dew [the dew of the morning of thy blessing] shall be as the dew lights—*pluralis excellentiæ*—fulness and perfectness of light, as when the rising sun shines forth upon the morning dew.

"And the earth shall cast forth mighty ones, or giants." This I regard as the right translation, not "shades," *manes*, as Horsley and margin of Revised Version; that would contradict the New Testament. "Dead" would be a better rendering than that. I regard רְפָאִים as being the plural of רָפָא—*Rephaims*, an ancient nation of the Canaanites, famous on account of their gigantic stature. See Gesenius, who also observes that the word *Rephaim*, "in a wider sense, appears to have comprehended all the giant nations of Canaan." When the time comes for this verse to be fulfilled, all the giants of earth shall give place for ever to the raised and glorified giants of God.

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own final blessings, how are they described? Are they described as something apart from and higher than those granted to Abraham? No. "They that are of faith blessed WITH faithful Abraham." "WITH" is not a word that implies *severance.* It implies *communion.* Indeed, to use the words of Dr. Horatius Bonar, the argument may be even more strongly stated. "'They that are of faith, the "'same are the children of Abraham.' 'IN THEE "'shall all nations of the earth be blessed' (iii. 8): "'blessed with faithful Abraham' (iii. 9): 'to "'Abraham and his seed were the promises made' "(iii. 16): 'that THE BLESSING of Abraham "'might come on the Gentiles through Jesus "'Christ' (iii. 14); 'if ye be Christ's, then are ye "'Abraham's SEED, and heirs according to the "'promise' (iv. 29). From these statements it is "plain that the question discussed by the Apostle "was—'Are believers in Christ really to *get up to* "'Abraham's privileges and standing?' He takes "for granted that the heirship was his; the king- "dom his; the sonship his; the glory his—made "over to him by the original promise; and his "object is to show us that *we* are to enter on "*Abraham's* privileges. 'The blessing of Abra- "'ham' he assumes to comprehend everything "that God has promised to us in Christ, and he "shows us that we are actually to get all that! "He speaks of Abraham as so lofty and so "glorious, that the highest place to be desired

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"by us is simply to be *one of his seed.* This is "the Church's privilege in consequence of her "connection with Christ: 'If ye be Christ's, "'then are ye Abraham's SEED!'"* In the Galatians, too, the Old Testament saints, though placed for a season in the condition of pupilage under the Law, were, nevertheless, "sons" of God. And what is the necessary consequence of being "sons"? "If sons, then heirs: heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." In the same Epistle we are taught that *all* the members of the family of faith, whether Jew or whether Gentile, are the children of Jerusalem that is above. "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all."

In the Colossians we are taught the antitypical meaning of circumcision. Circumcision, as the Lord Jesus Himself teaches us, was not "of Moses, but of the fathers." It was the sign of the covenant of *promise* made with Abraham. It signified that all the heirs of promise must be antitypically circumcised: that is, separated from all that characterised them in the flesh as children of the first Adam, and brought into that condition of glorious and unearthly being which is known in "the last Adam." This was effected for the whole family of faith by union being granted them with Christ in His death and resurrection. Thus they "are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands," "by the circumcision of Christ;" that is,

* Dr. H. Bonar, "Prophetic Journal."

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by circumcision effected for them by God through and in Christ. Circumcision, therefore, granted as God's pledge to Abraham, involves in its antitypical accomplishment association with Christ in His death and resurrection, and all the results of such association in union with Him as the Head of His body the Church, even as those results are detailed in the Epistle to the Colossians.

In the Hebrews we are taught that the "many sons" whom God is bringing into glory are regarded as the brethren of Christ, sanctified in Him, and made "one" with Him (Heb. ii. 11): and these blessings are expressly extended to the Old Testament saints in the 16th verse. "For verily He taketh not hold of angels; but of the seed of Abraham [*i.e.*, the whole family of faith] He taketh hold." In Hebrews vii. it is said of Abraham, not merely that he was the possessor of promise or promises, but that he had "THE PROMISES," that is, ALL the promises. Can any expression be more unlimited than that? We are further taught in the eleventh chapter, that "he looked for a city that hath foundations"—a heavenly city; and that heavenly city is elsewhere termed "the Bride, the Lamb's Wife."

Other texts might be added, but those referred to more than suffice. And now will any one affirm that Abraham can have this standing in the grace of God; that he can be justified by faith; have the imputed righteousness of Christ; be a son of

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God, and a joint-heir with Christ;—shall we say that all this, and much more, is true of Abraham, and yet that he is not on that Rock on which the Church is built? Surely no one will affirm that he could be like Peter on the Rock, and yet not be of the Church? The being on the Rock, and the belonging to the Church in glory, are convertible terms. Shall we say that, although it is true that Abraham is Christ's, and although the Scripture teaches that he who is Christ's hath "ALL THINGS" (1 Cor. iii. 22), yet that Abraham hath not "all things"? Are we to say that the father of the family of faith is excluded from the highest blessings of that family? Are we to say it is untrue that there is one Father "of whom the whole family," whether resting in the heavens, or yet militant in the earth, is alike named? Are we to say that Abraham hath "THE promises," and yet that the chiefest results of those promises he hath *not?* Are we to say that Abraham belongs to that heavenly city whose maker and builder is God, and that that city is termed "the Bride," and yet that he hath not the blessings which pertain to that city? Shall we say that Abraham, or any one else, can be washed in the blood of the Lamb, and yet not come under the full force of such a text as that found in the Ephesians—"Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it . . . . that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church," etc.? Was not Abraham under the effectual operation

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of everything here mentioned as making the Church what it is?

Some, apparently, have been deluded by the thought that in excluding Abraham and the Old Testament saints from the blessings that pertain to "the Bride," it is not intended to exclude them from "the Church," but only from a part of the Church's privileges—from a certain aspect, as it were, of the Church's glory. But this is not the doctrine of the system to which I refer. The passage quoted in the note on p. vi. is plain and unambiguous. It speaks of "risen and glorified saints *who do not form part of the Church.*"

Nor would it be possible to maintain that that holy and heavenly city, "new Jerusalem," which is so expressly termed "the Bride, the Lamb's Wife," represents merely a variation of official position or reward, such as might exist among individuals who had the same collective and corporate privileges. The heavenly city is a symbol of corporate condition. It represents the glory of the Church as a whole. Not to belong to it is spoken of as equivalent to perdition. "If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the Holy City, and from the things which are written in this book." On the other hand, all whose garments are washed—all who are redeemed—are regarded as having a title to entrance into that city. "Blessed are they that wash their gar-

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ments,* that they may have a right to the Tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." And as regards Abraham and the Old Testament saints, they are *by name* recognised in the eleventh of Hebrews as inheritors of the glory of this heavenly [*ἐπουρανια*] city. "But now they desire a better country, that is a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city." Of Abraham it is specifically said, "he looked for a city that hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God." Can they who thus inherit the city of God be excluded from the privileges implied by its name, "the Bride, the Lamb's Wife"?

I have already observed that that name does not imply mere official difference, such as might exist between two equally loved children of a king, one of whom might be placed over two cities, another over ten. It denotes the common united portion of the redeemed, in which they together share the fulness of the love of Christ their Saviour. Is it possible that any of the redeemed should be deprived of the perfectness of Christ's love? Is it not true of them all, that He loves them as Himself? If any were excluded from this fulness of love, and from that near access to the Lord which it implies, would they not esteem themselves to be deprived of the chiefest of all the blessings which

* Such is the true reading in this passage: *μακαριοι οἱ πλυνοντες τας στολας αὐτων.*

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redemption has bestowed? Abraham, and all the redeemed, will rise with perfect powers of being, for they will rise in the likeness of their risen Lord. They will see Him as He is: they will know even as they are known. No personal dissimilarity can exist among those who are all equally alike unto Christ. Their powers of understanding; their affections and their sensibilities, will be alike perfect. What then, if some of those thus qualified for full communion with their Lord, should be debarred from the same near access to His love that is granted to others? What if, having the same powers of holy love, they should not be allowed to manifest their love to Him as others will? Is anything like this conceivable in heaven? Is it conceivable that Abraham and Moses, and David and Daniel, should be shut out into comparative distance—which they would be if excluded from that City which is called "The Bride, the Lamb's Wife"? Can such a notion exist for one moment in the presence of the light of words such as these, "The glory which Thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may be ONE as we are one." These words apply to all those to whom the second verse in John xvii. applies—"As thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to *as many as Thou hast given Him.*"

There will, indeed, be difference of *reward* among the members of the one redeemed family, as is

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taught in the words, "Be thou over ten cities: be thou over five cities." But such differences interfere not with their common corporate blessings as the one family of God; and they are dependent, not on dispensational differences, not upon the fact that one has lived in a dispensation of great light, and another in a dispensation of less light. Differences of reward depend on differences in *faithfulness*. "Every one shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." If Abraham, in his Dispensation of lesser light, be more faithful than another who has lived in a Dispensation of greater light, he will receive a higher reward.

The saints of old were, for the most part, dispensationally under the Law. Although sons, yet whilst under a schoolmaster they differed nothing from servants, and therefore received the Spirit as the Spirit of servantship (*πνευμα δουλειας*, see Romans viii.), and not as we who, living after redemption has been perfected, receive Him as the Spirit of sonship or son-condition—*υἱοθεσιας*. Yet is it not written, that "a wise servant shall bear rule over a son that causes shame"?

Can any one doubt that there have been few in Christendom whose works can compare with those recorded in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, as wrought by Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and the holy men of old, who, with less light, had greater faith and faithfulness than we. It is a humbling thought that Abraham, with his less extended scope

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of knowledge should, in faith and faithfulness, have so vastly exceeded us who live in a Dispensation in which such fulness of light has been given. The Apostles seem to have been "set forth last" to walk practically in the path of those "appointed to death." Since the Apostles died Christ's people have sought to reign rather than to suffer. It is humbling to think of this; yet it is still more humbling (might I not say terrifying) to think that we, so inferior to Abraham practically in all our thoughts and ways, should yet venture to affirm, that because of his having, whilst on earth, lived in a Dispensation less favoured as to light than ours, he will have no place *with* us in the final glory of the Church of God, but be placed for ever in an inferior sphere. It is altogether otherwise. The prayer of the seventeenth of John has been prayed over the head of every believer that ever hath been, or ever shall be, from Adam and Eve, down to the last millennial saint who shall hear and receive the Gospel of the grace of God. There is one Father, one Lord, one Spirit, one faith. A oneness inconceivable to us will attach to every member of the family of faith when together brought as the mystical body of Christ into their final glory.

The text most relied on to prove that the Old Testament saints are to be excluded from our peculiar blessings is one which is intended to teach the very reverse. In the last verse of the eleventh of Hebrews the Apostle states, that although the

Old Testament saints had suffered so long and so faithfully, yet that God out of His love and care for us, the younger members of the same family, would not allow them, our elder brethren, to enter upon their promised glory "apart from (χωρις) us." He has appointed that they should wait for us. Their spirits are with Jesus in the Paradise of God, but their bodies are yet in the graves. God has appointed that they should not be perfected in resurrection apart from us. They await us.

This is the obvious meaning of the words as they at present are translated in our version. But if the central clause be placed, as it should be, in a parenthesis, and if the ellipsis be supplied, then all appearance of ambiguity is removed.

Nor must it be forgotten that the same system that excludes all the Old Testament saints from the Church of God in glory, excludes also every saint that shall be born into the family of faith during the coming day of Truth's millennial triumph. A time is coming when the vail that has so long rested on Israel as a nation shall be removed. Their long closed eyes shall be opened; they shall "look on Him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn;" the "Spirit of grace and of supplications" shall be poured upon them (Zech. xii,); "a nation" that shall truly be God's nation "shall be born in a day," and shall be made the centre of God's legislation and government in the earth. "To thee shall it come, even the first

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dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem." (Micah iv. 8.) Converted Israel shall become "a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." "God shall bless *them*, and so all the ends of the earth shall fear Him." (Psalm lxvii.)

Israel, as soon as they enter, as a nation, the family of faith, will be graffed back into their own Olive Tree from which, for eighteen hundred years and more, they have nationally been broken off. The symbolic Olive Tree of Romans xi., the sap of whose root is *promise and grace*, was first formally planted in the earth when Abraham, in the power of promise founded on sovereign grace, was first called into a place of distinctive separation in the earth, God saying unto him, "Blessing I WILL bless thee, and in multiplying I WILL multiply thee." Abraham believed and obeyed; but *all* Abraham's children had not the faith of Abraham, and faith is the necessary, and indeed the distinctive characteristic of the *true* Abrahamic family. "All are not Israel which [outwardly] are of Israel." (Rom. ix. 6.) Israel, *as a nation*, had not the distinctive family-feature. They were not "of faith;" and, consequently, rejected Him whose Advent Abraham foresaw. "Abraham," said the Lord Jesus, "rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." (John viii. 56.) But Israel, as a nation, belonging outwardly only to the Abrahamic family, persisted in rejecting Israel's King, and therefore have been broken out of the Olive Tree to which,

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ostensibly and by profession, they belonged. The excision of Israel was, in God's mercy, made the occasion of graffing a Gentile branch into the Abrahamic Olive Tree. Multitudes among the Gentiles accepted with joy the proposal to enter, through faith in Jesus, the Abrahamic family: for "they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." (Galatians iii. 7.) But an Adversary was nigh. The Devil came, and sowed tares among the wheat. Hosts of aliens have come in. All who professedly belong to Christ's Kingdom, are not really Christ's. As soon as the Apostles died, false profession predominated in Christendom, and Christendom became, even as it now is, corrupt. A cankered branch—a branch that has not continued in God's goodness, is now its symbol. Twigs and minor branches, few and comparatively hidden, may, as in Israel of old, receive sap from the root and bring forth some fruit, but the Gentile branch, as a whole, is cankered, and therefore, like the Israelitish that preceded it, is to be broken off. Excision is its doom. Nevertheless, all the saved, all who are "of faith," whether they belong to the Israelitish Dispensation of old, or to Gentile Christendom now, or to the Millennial Dispensation yet to come—all the saved of every Dispensation, all who belong to the Church of the living God, must have been borne by the root, and received of the sap of the root of this Olive Tree. To be excluded from the Abrahamic Olive Tree since

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that Olive Tree was planted in the earth, is to be excluded from the Church of God. The remnant according to the election of grace that are, or have been, found in Gentile Christendom, have no Church-blessing, no spiritual blessing of any kind that is not derived from the fatness of the root of the Abrahamic Olive Tree. If they who receive of that fatness are not thereby constituted members of the one true only Church, there is no Church at all. Destroy the truths of the eleventh of Romans, and you destroy the record of the methods of God's mercy in dealing both with Jew and Gentile. Receive the truth of that chapter, and you will attain a sure conviction, such as no circumstances can shake, that all the saints of every Dispensation are associated for ever and ever in the same blessings, and the same fatness; and this, the Dispensation of the fulness of times that shall succeed the Millennial Age, will fully disclose. If we believe not these things we believe not in "the communion of saints." Oneness in glory is their portion.

We have ever to remember that the Rock on which the Church is builded is not the Spirit, or any grace or gift communicated by the Spirit. The bestowments of the Spirit may, and do vary, in degree and in kind, in different individuals and in different Dispensations: but the Rock is unchangeably one; and that Rock is CHRIST. Christ alone is the Rock of salvation; and He became that Rock in virtue of the work accomplished by

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Him in the earth as the obeying Surety of His believing people. "By the obedience of the One shall the many be constituted righteous." (Rom. v.) "Like precious faith WITH US in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ," are words which the Apostles would apply to every member of the household of faith, past, present, and to come. The time indeed is yet future when Jerusalem and the nation of Israel as a whole, will hear and welcome the blessed words, "This is that which shall be to her [Jerusalem] proclaimed, JEHOVAH IS OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."* (Jeremiah xxxiii.) As soon as Jerusalem and Israel hear these words believingly, they will be on the Rock; and *as a consequence thereof* (not as a cause) the Lord God will come and dwell with them, and the name of that City shall be from that time forth, Jehovah-shammah, the Lord is there. (Ezekiel xlviii. 35.) Virtually, it is not otherwise with believers now. It is true, indeed, that there is no manifested glory; no reigning city; yet all believers may say, "Jehovah is our righteousness," and as a consequence, God the Holy Ghost dwells with them, and is in them. The spiritual blessings of spiritual Israel we forestall: so that in spiritual things the words of Israel's future joy become the language of our present confidence. Converted Israel by and by, and all

* See Hebrew. The habit of the Hebrew is to omit the copula. In English it should be expressed.

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who are of faith now, are but different parts of the same family, finally to be united as one glorified Church in those New Heavens and New Earth for which we and they are alike to wait. "The Church of the first-born ones" (that is, all those who shall rise in the first resurrection and share during the Millennium the heavenly glory of their Lord), and converted Israel, and all other members of the family of faith on earth, will alike say, till the Adamic heavens and earth end, "We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein righteousness dwelleth." When the Dispensation of "the fulness of times" (the Dispensation that succeeds the Millennium) shall have come, then, and not till then, will the Church *as a whole* be complete, and not till then will the Heavenly City descend into the New Earth prepared for her. The Millennial saints will not be excluded from that common meeting-place of the redeemed. "Gather my saints together unto me—those that have made a covenant with me by SACRIFICE," are words sufficient to decide this and every question that concerns the unity of the redeemed in glory. As used in the Psalm they pertain to the commencement of the Millennium; but the truth embodied in them will equally guide the action of God at the Millennium's close.

The words, "Jehovah is our righteousness," are words which sufficiently declare the meritorious agency by which all the blessings of the redeemed

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are earned. Our ruin as men was earned by Adam's *act* in *sinning;* as believers, our deliverance and exaltation and glory have been earned by Christ's *act* in *obeying*. "As by the disobedience of one the many were constituted sinners, so by the obedience of One shall the many be constituted righteous." Before the world was, Jehovah the Son, voluntarily undertook to be the Sponsor and Surety of all whom the Father gave to Him, that He might bring them "as sons unto glory." They needed rescue, and they needed merits, for they were lost sinners. By becoming as their Surety, *legally* one with them, and so acting towards God in their stead, He associated them (as soon as they were brought to Him through faith) with that condition of perfected service which He for them had, in life and death, rendered. Accordingly, they, though not doing what He did, nor suffering what He suffered, are nevertheless treated on the ground of (ἐφ' ᾧ) having done what He did, and having suffered what He suffered; for, by the appointment of God, a legal oneness subsists between Jesus and all for whom Jesus served. Such was the method of God's salvation. So were fulfilled the words, "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded." (1 Peter ii. 6.) The precious stone was laid, not in Heaven but in earth: it was laid in Zion: it was laid in death—judicial death—death under wrath: yet it was a living stone and

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precious, and to you that believe, says the Apostle, that preciousness belongs. Is this verse, quoted by Peter from Isaiah, and applied to us in this present Dispensation, to be refused to Israel? Does not God speak of it as the very point on which all His dealings with Israel in covenanted mercy turn? Christ's righteousness presented for us in His sacrificial death was a *meritorious* righteousness. No obedience of a mere creature could be meritorious as His was. We, if we should do all that was commanded us, would be but "unprofitable servants:" we should merely have done that which it was "our duty to do." But He was "Jehovah's fellow." His service was altogether voluntary and unconstrained. Consequently it was meritorious; and because of the dignity of the Person, it was infinitely meritorious; and thus a rewardableness attaches to it too vast for us to estimate: but God has estimated it, and according to His estimate thereof is the rewardableness of the redeemed. The redeemed are "God's inheritance." (Eph. i. 18.) They are "in Him that is true, even the true God and eternal Life." They are filled to the full (πεπληρωμενοι, Coloss. ii. 10), in Him who is the Head of all principality and power. They are Christ's mystical body, and as Head over all things governmentally, He has been given also to be Head (in the power of vital union) to the Church, which thus becomes His mystical "body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

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And because they are this, the Holy Ghost, as the seal and earnest of the coming glory, is given, that we might *know* (not that we might *have*) the things that have been freely given us of God (*τα χαρισθεντα ὑπο θεου*). Important words these! They teach us that, howsoever great the resulting blessings (and they are vast, and to us unsearchable) yet they are but results—results of the infinite meritoriousness imputed to us in virtue of that legal Surety-oneness which God gave to us in Christ. The service that He performed for us in virtue of that Surety-oneness becomes the meritorious cause of all subsequent imparted blessing. Union and fellowship with Christ in life and glory, and all the powers of thought and action thence resulting, are the results, not the cause of the bestowments which grace has conferred simply and only because of the external work of our Surety, who served for us, and made us heirs of glory, not when *living* members of His body, but when sinners. He died for the ungodly. "While we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

I dwell on this subject at greater length than I should have desired because of its vast importance. It is a question on which, perhaps, more than any other, Satan has ever striven to confuse and undermine the faith of Christ's people, and never more than at the present time. And he has wonderfully succeeded. A person, prominent in profession of faith and service, lately said to me,

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"I do not object generally to what you say respecting Atonement and its results; but I reject, altogether, the use you have made of Romans v. 21. In speaking of the grace that reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord, you said that 'the righteousness' meant an external righteousness performed for us by the Lord Jesus Christ and imputed to us: I, on the contrary, maintain that it is a righteousness wrought IN us, and maintained IN us by Him, and so grace reigns over us." A momentous difference this! They who teach that grace reigns over us unto eternal life because of righteousness infused, may imagine they hold the doctrine of Atonement as taught in Scripture; but they hold it only in name. The moment after the Apostles died the professing Church eschewed the doctrine of *Imputation*, and put *Impartation* in its room. At the Reformation, for a time, there was a Revival; but it soon languished. The Reformers died; and few now recognise the value of their distinctive testimonies. Of late years there has scarcely been a book published on "Sanctity," or "Holiness," or "Prophecy," that does not, more or less, undermine the doctrine of Imputed Righteousness, either by failing to distinguish aright between our "legal oneness" with our Surety, and the subsequent relations thence resulting, or else by dissociating from the legal oneness, results, which, (by God's appointment,) are inseparably connected therewith. This

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last is done by all who exclude either the Old Testament Saints, or the Millennial Saints from the Church of God in glory. All such, if they profess to receive the doctrine of Imputed Righteousness, hold it only in name. They cannot hold it as it is taught in Scripture; for, by the Imputation of Christ's righteousness, all to whom it pertains, are brought into the possession of a meritoriousness whose value is infinite, and secures the inheritance of "all things." The Scripture knows of no salvation that does not involve *joint-heirship* with Christ; and joint-heirship with Him involves the inheritance of "all things."

The promises given by God to His redeemed people are not rendered uncertain by being gradually fulfilled. The promise given in Christ before the world was, has been very gradually developed. The light granted to Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, was less than that granted to Abraham. That granted to Abraham was less than that granted to Moses. That granted to Moses was less than that granted at Pentecost. These dispensational differences were great and important, but they affect not the pillar of our strength, for that is found in Immanuel's work which He wrought, apart from us, by Himself alone. It was a sacrificial work, wrought on behalf of the whole family of faith, from Adam and Eve, down to the last Millennial saint who shall believe. It is the one oblation of the Holy One that gives to every believer in every Dispen-

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sation his title to all the grace, love, glory, and blessing, that will make the Church what it will be in its final perfectness. The electing love of God in choosing us before the world was, and appointing for us a Surety who should by His own meritorious service provide a sure title unto glory, may be termed the *root* blessing in the economy of grace. The separate and independent action of our Surety, whereby the title to all fulness of glory is secured, may be looked on as the *trunk* in the tree of blessing. The resulting bestowments of God's grace, partly granted now, but fully to be developed in eternity, may be regarded as *branch-blessings*—sure to be possessed, sooner or later, by all who are associated with the root and stem, but not necessarily made *actually* theirs until eternity comes. We who live after Pentecost have more of the developed or *branch-blessings* than the Old Testament Saints had, for although (as I have before said) they had the Spirit as the Spirit of servantship (δουλειας, Rom. viii. 15), they were not treated as those who were brought into the full "condition of sonship" (υἱοθεσια), and therefore the Spirit as the Spirit of son-condition (πνευμα υἱοθεσιας) was not given to them whilst on earth. To us it is given, not that we might *have*, but that we might "*know* the things that have been freely given unto us by God." (1 Cor. ii. 12.) But although we have in one sense received the condition of sons, yet in another sense we have not, for in Rom. viii. 23, we

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are described as still waiting for it—"waiting for the condition of sonship, to wit, the redemption of the body." If, then, we who do not attain the full development of son-condition on earth, are not thereby excluded from its future full development in Heaven, why should we exclude the Old Testament Saints from that full final development, on the ground that they had only a restricted development whilst on earth? In our case, as well as theirs, development whilst we are on earth is restricted. Distinction, therefore, must be made between—

I. Blessings promised merely;

II. Blessings secured fully in title, through the finished service of our Substitute, and also partially received;

III. Blessings fully communicated.

They who have *the Title* will ultimately have *all* the results.

Nor must we forget that wonderful narrative of Abraham's triumph over opposing strengh, recorded in the fourteenth of Genesis. Mighty hosts issuing from the very homes of Asiatic power (of which Shinar [Babylonia] and Elam [Persia] were two) swept over Syria, and entered Canaan. Their triumph was complete: five kings succumbed to them, when Abraham, aroused by the capture of his kinsman Lot, hastily armed his servants (three hundred and eighteen was their number), attacked the mighty myriads of the foe, and overthrew them utterly. God "gave them as dust to his sword,

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and as driven stubble to his bow." (See Isaiah xli. 2.) It was one of the most marvellous acts that God had as yet performed in the midst of men. "The isles saw it, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, and drew near, and came," and fled to their idols for refuge against this unexpected intervention of supernatural strength. The nations trembled; but those who, like Melchisedek, feared God, rejoiced. As Abraham returned from the slaughter of the kings, Melchisedek, king of Salem (king of righteousness and king of peace), met him. And Melchisedek was the priest of the Most High God, and he blessed Abraham, and said, "Blessed be Abraham of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth." Often are we accustomed to read this narrative; but do we ponder it? Do we read it merely as a tale of the past, or do we see in it a record premonitory of things yet to come? A time is drawing nigh when a feeble remnant, whom grace will rescue and strengthen in the midst of crushed and down-trodden Israel, shall, though compassed by foes mightier and more terrible than those which confronted Abraham, be suddenly strengthened, even as Abraham was, and brought into that *final* triumph over the world's unregenerate might which the victory of Abraham foreshadowed. "In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them. And

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it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one that mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." (Zech. xii. 8.) And who will meet Israel in that day of sorrow and of triumph? Who will comfort them? He whom Melchisedek typified. Jesus, the true King of Righteousness and of Peace, will, as the Priest of the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth, meet Israel, even as the typical Melchisedek met Abraham, and will pronounce over them words of blessing like to those that were spoken over the head of Abraham. Joyfully then will Israel own Him as their Priest, their King, and their God; whilst He, according to the grace of Salem and the righteousness of His own great name, will cherish and comfort them. "This is that which shall be to her [Israel] proclaimed, Jehovah is our Righteousness." * Abraham, therefore, and Israel, when brought (as they by-and-by will be) into the one family of faith, will alike stand under the fulness of the blessings earned and secured for them by the service of the true Melchisedek. Through Him

* Such is the right translation of this much perverted verse in Jeremiah.

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they will inherit all fulness of life, love, grace and glory. If there could be any question of the exclusion of any part of the redeemed from that fulness, the question would be with respect to us, sinners of the Gentiles. Are we excluded? No: we too are taught to say, "We have a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek; one who ever liveth to make intercession for them who come unto God by Him. Abraham has in Him a Surety, a Sacrifice, a Risen Head, a Priest and a King. Converted Israel will have in Him a Surety, a Sacrifice, a Risen Head, Priest and King. We cannot destroy (why should we wish to destroy?) this unity of blessing that sovereign grace has given. Shall we repudiate it? They who have it not must perish. There is only one salvation.

Of all the Dispensations that yet have been, there is none in which there has been such disastrous failure as that in which Gentile Christendom has been the professed witness for God. To that Dispensation we belong. Its symbol in Scripture is a cankered olive branch—a branch that has not continued in God's goodness; and although, through God's grace, some fruit-bearing twigs are still found, yet they are few and feeble, checked in growth and hindered in development. "This know, that in the last days perilous times shall come. Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse." "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of the greater part" (*των πολλων*) of Christ's own people, "shall wax

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cold." "Endurance" and "holding fast," rather than energy and vigour, is to be the prevailing characteristic even of the true members of the family of faith. It is while contemplating this scene of weakness and desolation that the Lord is represented as saying, "Or ever I was aware, my soul set me upon the chariots of my willing people." His soul turned to the coming period when Israel His people will be made willing in the day of His power. Blessed indeed will be the hour when He shall say, "Return, return, O bride of Solomon."

When converted Israel shall succeed to the place of testimony that has been so long and so unworthily held by Gentile Christendom, there will be for the first time seen in earth a corporate body established in a strength that shall know no decrease. The light which it shall be given to them to maintain shall never wane: it shall go on diffusing and developing itself till it mingle itself into the brightness and glory of that day in which "all things" shall be made "new." The words, "Arise, shine: for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee," are words not to be limited to the governmental greatness and glory of Jerusalem: she shall indeed be "a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of her God" (Is. lxii. 3); but in addition to this she shall be the appointed witness of God's saving Truth. Her "righteousness shall go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that

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burneth." She shall be the first body in the earth whose corporate standing shall be indefectibly sustained. What she begins to be, that she will continue to be. "Thy people shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified." Though many who have walked well and holily in days of sorrow, have been found to fail when brought into the sunshine of prosperity and greatness, yet so it shall not be with Israel. Through grace they shall be faithful to the Lord their God; and whilst some have glorified Him in weakness and sorrow, they shall glorify Him in strength and exaltation. Gentile Christianity has been wise in its own conceits, and boasted itself, and sought to reign in kingship when God appointed it to suffer: but Israel in the midst of their high exaltation and glory will say, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child. Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and for ever." (Ps. cxxxi.) Gentile Christianity has had its history marked by strife and division. There have been many tongues; many teachers; and, as a result, hopeless discord; but in Israel there shall be holy unity. . "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the

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head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments: as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." (Ps. cxxxiii.) In Israel too shall be found the power of holy and accepted worship. "Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the Lord. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord. The Lord that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion." (Ps. cxxxiv.) Great grace will rest upon them, so that their ways and character shall stand in wondrous contrast with the feebleness and faithlessness of our present Dispensation. Having the same calling in the grace of Christ, they will practically glorify Him in a way that we have not done. Are these the persons that are to be excluded from the Church in its final glory? It would be difficult to characterise aright the monstrosity of the folly, or, I should rather say, the evil of such a thought. "You" [Gentile believers], says the Apostle, "are, I thankfully acknowledge, '*first fruits*,' and I would not diminish aught of the vastness of that blessing; but if the first-fruits be holy, the lump (which is the second-fruits) is holy likewise, and if the root be holy, so are the branches." "And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert graffed in among them, and with them par-

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takest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee." See also the words of the Apostle to the Gentile Church in the second of the Ephesians: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands: that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." What are we here taught? We are taught that unless we are incorporated through faith into the Commonwealth of Israel, we are lost. We have no part with Christ. And what does the Lord Jesus say? Speaking to some who belonged to the Jewish flock, He said, "Other sheep I have which are not of this [Jewish] fold [but are Gentiles]: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice: and there shall be one FLOCK (ποιμνη), and one Shepherd." Shall we then contradict this, and say that there are two flocks, two Shepherds, two Commonwealths, and two Olive-trees? We have need to remember the words, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins;" for what can be more presumptuous than attempts to alter the declarations of God's written Word—written that it might endure.

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Abraham's History in Genesis XII.

SCARCELY had the waters of the Flood departed from the recovered earth, when men, neither dismayed by judgment nor softened by mercy, began again to corrupt themselves. Even Abraham's family were found serving other gods. "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods." (Josh. xxiv. 2.) Universal corruption seemed again about to reign, when God, pursuing the secret counsel of His grace, interfered. It was His purpose to separate or "sever" unto Himself a peculiar people. "I," said God, addressing Israel, "I the Lord am holy, and have SEVERED you from other people that ye should be mine." At the call of Abraham, God began to carry into effect this purpose of separating or severing a people unto Himself: and on this principle He has ever since acted, and will continue to act until the necessity for such severation shall cease by all things in and around the redeemed being made perfect according to the perfectness of God.

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Now the Lord had said unto Abraham, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred and from thy father's house, unto a land that I WILL SHOW thee: and I WILL MAKE of thee a great nation, and I WILL BLESS thee, and make thy name great; and thou SHALT BE a blessing: and I WILL BLESS them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Such were the words of faithful promise with which the God of glory called Abraham. He was separated not only *from* evil, but he was separated *unto* blessing—blessing sure and certain, because dependent not on himself, but on the love, and power, and faithfulness of God. Was Abraham to be led into another land? God said, "*I* will show it unto thee." Was he to be made a great nation? God said, "*I* will make of thee a great nation." Was he to be blessed, and to be made a blessing? God said, "*I* will bless thee, and thou SHALT BE a blessing." God undertook to be the accomplisher of all these things. Abraham was the recipient—God the giver. Promise, springing from grace and maintained by grace, was the distinctive characteristic of Abraham's call. He was to prove, and to be an example of the blessed truth that "the gifts and calling of God are unrepented of (*αμεταμελητα*)." The Olive-tree (to use the symbol of the Apostle in Romans xi.), the fatness of whose root is promise—*unconditional*

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promise in the power of grace, then first appeared; and although many of its branches have been sapless (for branches, however good the root, may through disease be sapless), and although many of those branches *have been* broken off, and many still remain to be broken off, yet the Olive-tree itself continues. It stands, and will stand unto the end: nor has there ever been an age either during the past days of Israel, or the present days of Christendom, in which some of its twigs and lesser branches have not borne some fruit unto God. The true Church of God may have been feeble, and few, and scattered; yet they have never ceased to exist as inheritors of Abrahamic promise. They have ever been in God's sight, and will be till the end, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people" on whom His covenant blessing for ever rests—of whom He has said, "Blessed, yea and they shall be blessed."

The words with which this chapter commences belong not, it will be observed, to the time to which the narrative of the chapter belongs; they refer to an antecedent period: "The Lord HAD said unto Abraham." "The God of glory," said Stephen, "appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran [he was in Charran when the narrative of this chapter commences], and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country . . . . into the Land that I will show thee." Many years had

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passed since Abraham, in obedience to these words, had quitted his Chaldæan home. But he had not reached Canaan. He had tarried on the way; and whilst Terah lived, that tarrying continued. The land from which he had been called was left; so far God's summons was obeyed; but the land of promise to which he was called, was not entered; nor was it entered whilst Terah lived.

Doubtless, when Abraham was (to use his own expression) "caused to wander" as a pilgrim from his country, and kindred, and father's house, it was a special and peculiar mercy that Terah, his father, and Lot, his brother's son, were made willing to be the companions of his way. Yet natural mercies, when granted to those who are called into a foremost place in the conflicts of faith, require a proportionate increase of watchfulness, and wisdom, and grace, if they are really to become blessings in result. One thing especially is to be remembered—that the claims of nature must always be subordinated to those of grace. Age, station, relationship, may confer authority and influence in the natural sphere (and within that sphere their claims are to be carefully recognised), but they are not to intrude within the *spiritual* circle so as to control the order and arrangement there. Affection, kindness, and respect were due to Terah from Abraham his son; but when God had been pleased to call, not Terah

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but Abraham, into the distinct and peculiar path which His grace assigned to that "heir of promise," it was for Terah the father to own the precedence which grace had given to Abraham the son: it became Terah's place to follow, and Abraham's place to lead. But it seems to have been otherwise. We do not read in Genesis that Abraham took Terah, which (would have been the order according to the arrangement of grace); but we read, "Terah took Abram." In other words, the order of nature prevailed, and set aside the arrangements of God. We cannot wonder, therefore, that whilst Terah lived, Canaan was never reached. It was not until Terah died that Abraham assumed his proper place of headship and control. Then "Abram departed as the Lord had spoken unto him, and Lot went with him." We read of no further difficulties delaying them. "They went forth to go into the Land of Canaan; and into the Land of Canaan they came."

But though Abraham had reached the Land of his destined inheritance, he was nevertheless still a stranger and pilgrim therein. The Canaanite was still there. Dangers and difficulties surrounded him. He was still a dweller in tents, having no abiding resting place: and his only security was close adherence to God as his guardian and guide. His was to be a prolonged life of faith. He had come forth when called, "not knowing whither he went;" and now that

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he had reached Canaan, he was as dependent as ever on the daily guidance of his God. Nor was God unmindful of His servant. God again appeared unto him, and said, "Unto thy seed will I give this land:" so that Abraham might cast his eyes around and look northward, and eastward, and southward, and westward, and say, all that I behold is mine, even whilst as yet I have nothing. How like to the place still held by the family of faith—his children. Separated by the secret power of Truth in the midst of a world that knows them not, they are taught to say, "All things are ours." "He that overcometh shall inherit ALL things"—things in heaven and things in earth—as made joint-heirs with Christ. A wider view is opened to our faith even than that vouchsafed to Abraham; for the time was not come to show unto Abraham then, all that he was destined to inherit. Yet although taught to say, "all things are ours," what have we at present? Tribulation, scorn, rejection, reproach. Just in proportion as our faith and faithfulness increases, we become more like to him who said, "we are made as the filth of the world, the off-scouring of all things unto this day." Whilst the Canaanite yet abides and rules, the children of faith cannot reign. "They look for a city that hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God."

Abraham then, although in Canaan, yet still needed God to be his daily sustainer and guide.

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And this, at first, he seems fully to have recognised; for twice we read of his building an altar unto the Lord on whose name he called. But when he journeyed the third time—moving on towards the south, that is, in the direction of Egypt, we read no more of his building an altar, or of his calling on the name of the Lord. He seems to have entered, unbidden, on a self-chosen path.

There is perhaps no moment in the life of a believer when he has more need to watch, than when he has been enabled to reach some point of desired and honoured attainment in the path of his pilgrimage. It was a great thing for Abraham to have left the land of his fathers, and to have followed on obediently until at last he entered the Land into which it was the object of God to bring him. His obedience was so far complete. He had left what he had been commanded to leave, and had gone to the very place to which he had been commanded to go. He felt, perhaps, that he had done great things. Self-complacency not unfrequently attends successful obedience. He may have expected too, now that he had reached Canaan, to enjoy present rest. Could it be still needful that there should be the same anxious vigilance as during the days of his weary journeyings? Was the end of those journeyings to come without bringing with it any result of present good? Nature soon becomes impatient, disappointed, fretful—a condition very adverse to the calm, quiet

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exercise of faith. Patient endurance, and the sorrow of hope long deferred, were among the lessons to be taught to Abraham—and finally he learnt them. Now, however, he went journeying on, no longer waiting on the guidance of his heavenly Friend. "Abraham journeyed, going on still towards the south."

And now a fresh and unexpected sorrow crossed his way. "There was a famine in the land." Was this then the issue of his painful wanderings? Had he left the land of his forefathers and come into this distant land, in order that he might there encounter not only perils from men, but sorrows sent immediately from the hand of God? This would have been a trial to Abraham's faith even if he had continued to wait as aforetime on God; but now that he had entered on a self-chosen path, and had ceased, as of old, to build an altar to the Lord and call upon His name, how could it be expected that he would stand. Affliction, under any circumstances, has a tendency to depress the servant of God, but how much more when the conscience testifies that it comes as chastisement, and that the chastisement has been earned by carelessness or by disobedience. In such a case, grace—full, perfect, sovereign grace, is the only refuge. But when the heart is unduly depressed, or froward or fretful, it is very slow to turn to the resources of grace. Abraham did not. Grace was still watching over him, and was able to bring to him present com-

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fort and present succour. But he did not turn to God's grace. He turned to his own devisings. If there was famine in the land, he would abandon the land and seek refuge in another land, even though that land was Egypt. "Abraham went down into Egypt to sojourn there."

When the heart sets itself free from the restraints of God, it appears often to be given over to a daring and reckless impetuosity that seems to blind itself to the most obvious consequences, until confronted by their very presence. So was it with Abraham. He went boldly on towards Egypt until he reached its very confines; and when he stood there, with Canaan behind and Egypt before, he at last bethought himself of a danger that was a very obvious danger, and that had in truth occupied his thoughts long before. Would Sarai be safe in Egypt? If the Egyptians coveted Sarai would his life be safe? "They will kill me," said he, "but they will save thee alive." How strange—how sorrowful a position for the once faithful and obedient Abraham! With the famine behind, and this yet more terrible danger before, where could he turn for succour? He had left his only true succour. Would he humble himself and return to God? He might have returned. It was not too late for him to return and he would have found grace in all fulness, even that grace that "upbraideth not" for the past. But his heart was not humbled. He sought not

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to return, but resolved to brave the danger, not by casting himself on God, but by sacrificing Sarai, and by telling a lie. His life had become very precious in his own sight—more precious than Canaan, or Sarai, or the favour of his God. He was ready to barter all if he could only secure his life—and he succeeded. He secured his life. He obtained not only safety, but riches and honour. Sarai "was taken into Pharaoh's house; and he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels." There was no danger of famine now. Wealth and splendour surrounded him, and he had attained a rest. But was his conscience at rest? Was his heart happy? How could it be? He had not only lost Sarai—her whom he loved—her who had been the companion of his wanderings, but he had imperilled her—placed her on the very edge of a precipice of lasting and deadly sin, after having involved her and himself in the guilt of a virtual lie. He had abandoned Canaan also—the Land of promise—the Land to which God had led him, and which had been shown to him as his inheritance. He had lost too the present guidance of his God. He no longer looked to Him as before; no longer communed with Him; no longer knew Him as the companion and guardian of his way. All this he had lost, and he had earned for himself a burdened conscience—a heart which, until

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it repented, could never again know peace. The outward scene around him might be bright; but how fearfully that outward brightness must have contrasted with the darkness that brooded within!

Yet Abraham turned not—repented not. His conscience, deaf to the appeals both of the past and of the present, was ready to dare all consequences. There was no hope, therefore, save in a direct interference of the power of God: and God did interfere, not indeed by touching Abraham's heart, but by chastening and arousing Pharaoh, and causing Pharaoh to rebuke and drive Abraham back into the way from which he had departed. Abraham himself, unstricken and unpunished, with Sarai restored to him, again found himself in the Land which he had abandoned, and there retracing all his steps, again reached the place whence his sinful wanderings commenced, where last he had built an altar, and where he again built one, and again called on the name of the Lord. Such was the faithfulness—such the triumph of the GRACE of God. How truly abounding where sin abounded!

But let it not be supposed that Abraham was thus restored without deep contrition and abasement of soul. It is true indeed that we have, in his case, no recorded words of penitence like those of David: but we may be very sure that Abraham also learnt to say, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones

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which thou hast broken may rejoice." God is not accustomed to restore His servants to their proper privileges and blessings without first causing their hearts to bow and to make manifest, the fruits of a repentance not to be repented of. Abraham's whole subsequent course, with one sad exception, abundantly proved that he had a heart tender and contrite, and well disciplined in the ways of the Lord. May we ever read then this wondrous narrative of grace with thankfulness indeed, but with awe—awe at the baseness of our own hearts, thankfulness for the superabounding grace and faithfulness of God. May we never turn His mercies into a curse by encouraging ourselves in carelessness or licentiousness—sinning that grace may abound. The Scripture teaches us these lessons respecting grace, not that we might wed ourselves to sin, but that we might, with holy fear, cleave the more closely unto God.

We must remember also, that although strict parallelism is seldom, if ever, found between the narratives of Scripture and our own history (whether individual or collective), yet that partial resemblances and analogies may frequently be traced, affording much profitable instruction. If, for example, they in whom ought to dwell a certain manhood and vigour of faith, capable of directing and sustaining others, should falter and fail, and betray those whom they ought to uphold in the separateness of Truth, into circumstances of worldliness

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and sin—is there no resemblance between this and the sin of Abraham in sacrificing Sarai and placing her in Pharaoh's house? Surely, if we look back over the history of the Church, we must admit that with the Apostles died that vigour and simplicity of faith which kept, for a time, the Church, as the Bride of Christ, separate in the power of Truth. But then other leaders arose who sought, and who gained the rest, and riches, and dignity of Egypt at the sacrifice of well-nigh everything that should have been counted precious. The past and present condition of Christendom abundantly testifies to the results. The proper place of separateness will never long be quitted by any, without the betrayal or giving up of something that ought to be dearer and more precious to us than life. And if the world be allowed to grasp and to hold that which we have betrayed, and to keep the children of faith in their (it may be golden) fetters, what can ensue but ruin? There may be an adulterous union between the Church and those who lead and direct the energies of the world.

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Abraham and Lot in Genesis XIII.

In the former chapter we have considered the narrative given in the twelfth of Genesis respecting the faithless departure of Abraham from the guidance of his heavenly Friend, until, having abandoned Canaan, the land of his hope, he found himself in Egypt, stripped of everything that ought to have been dear to him; yet, still by persistence in his sin, involving himself more and more deeply in falsehood and guilt. There was One only who could effectually pity: One only who could rescue. And He did pity. God, though unsought, interfered to rescue His fallen servant, and brought him back into Canaan again; even to the very place whence his sinful wanderings commenced. There last he had builded an altar and invoked the name of the Lord, and thither he was caused to return. There again "Abraham called on the name of the Lord."

The Scripture speaks not of his contrition: but we may be sure it was very deep. "Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin, for I acknowledge mine iniquity, and my sin is ever before me"—was no doubt the language of his soul; for God never restores His

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servants after they have fallen, so as for His name to be again magnified in them, without first humbling them and bringing their hearts very low in deep and abiding contrition. The subsequent history of Abraham supplies abundant evidence of a subdued and chastened spirit. In separating Abraham it was the design of God not only to protect him and ultimately crown him with blessing; it was also His purpose to make Abraham His honoured servant among men, and to glorify in him His holy name.

An occasion for the trial of Abraham's faith soon presented itself. The favour of God had rested abundantly both on Abraham and on Lot in giving them flocks, and herds, and tents, and much prosperity. They were rich; but their riches had not been acquired by violence or by evil. Their prosperity was the gift of God: nor had they, through inordinate occupation with the gift, forsaken or forgotten the Giver. Yet when the child of faith, pilgrim as he is and sojourner in a world that knows not God, finds himself surrounded by great outward prosperity, he has no little reason to fear. Riches become a curse and not a blessing, unless they are used for God: and for this no ordinary faithfulness, and wisdom, and grace are needed. The snares of Satan for the people of God are generally laid in connexion with some outward blessings that the providence of God has given. So was it in the history before

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us. It was the abundance of the possessions of Lot and of Abraham that gave occasion of strife to their servants. The soul of Abraham was grieved. He spoke to Lot, and proposed to him *separation*. "And Abraham said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee; if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left."

No words can more plainly show the unselfishness and generosity of the heart of Abraham. Although he was the elder and the chief—the person who had every title to choose and to command, yet he willingly relinquished all his rights, content to depart, or content to remain, as Lot, his brother's son, might determine. "If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." It was a question of little moment to Abraham where the tent of his pilgrimage was pitched. He was seeking a heavenly city. He was a stranger and pilgrim on the earth.

And now, if Lot had been wise with heavenly wisdom, what would have been his reply? Would he not have shrunk from the very sound of the word "separation"? Abraham and Lot were brethren—near kinsmen in the flesh, but yet more,

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brethren in tribulation, for they were pilgrims and sojourners in a strange country, surrounded too by many enemies, for the Canaanite and the Perizzite were still in the land. Was this a time for Lot to separate from Abraham? Nor was this all. Abraham, as Lot well knew, was the called of God. To *him* God had spoken: *him* God had made the depositary of the promises: to *him* God had said, "I will bless thee and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing, ... and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." God had brought Abraham into a relation to Himself in which no one else, throughout the whole earth, stood: and therefore to separate from Abraham was virtually to separate from that peculiar care and guidance of God, of which Abraham was the subject. Faith (if faith had been in anything like lively exercise in the soul of Lot) would instantly have recognised this, and would, in a moment, if necessary, have resigned flocks, herds, servants, and all other such like things, rather than abandon him whom God had separated to Himself for present and for everlasting blessing.

But faith was *not* lively in the soul of Lot. Nature was practically ruling there. The sinfulness of quitting the side of Abraham (if the thought of sinfulness occurred to him at all) weighed like chaff in the balance in comparison with the loveliness of that fair plain, so near, so pleasant, which Lot saw before him, smiling with

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Eden-like beauty. Perhaps he had long coveted it—perhaps he had long fretted against the chain that bound him so closely to the steps of Abraham. And this Abraham may have known.

It is impossible, with certainty, to determine what it was that induced Abraham to propose to Lot separation. It may have been weakness in Abraham: or it may have been that he was conscious that Lot desired to be set free from the bond that bound him, and Abraham may have shrunk from the painfulness of perpetually thwarting the desires of Lot's heart. Few things are more distressing to the sensitive heart than to constrain the adherence of those who are longing to depart. Abraham was not above the weakness of humanity, and he may have wrongly yielded to the desire of gratifying the inclinations of his friend. This is possible. But it is more probable that Abraham, in accordance with the will of God, proposed to Lot a course by which Lot, who needed discipline, was to be disciplined, and chastened, and taught. When the heart is obstinately bent on following a self-devised path of folly, God may judicially appoint that the desired path shall be trodden until its results shall have been made apparent, and the bitter lesson of experience learned. When Israel chose to question whether the land of which God had spoken to them as "good," was really such as the Lord had said, and thought of sending

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spies to view it (Deuteronomy i. 22), the Lord hindered not the unbelieving mission—on the contrary, He commanded Moses to choose spies and send them (Numbers xiii. 1.); that so Israel might reap the fruits of their folly, and learn that it had been better to have confided simply in God, than to seek to test His veracity, and to measure the capabilities of His power, by appealing to those whose hearts, dark, timid, and unbelieving, could neither see any thing in the light of faith, nor hope for any thing that exceeded the capacities of their own impotency. Thus too, when Israel murmured and desired a king—a king was given, but sorrow followed. The judicial inflictions of the hand of God are not unfrequently occasioned by the self-will or fretfulness of those on whom they are sent. It may have been thus in the case of Lot. It may have been that God designed through Abraham, to propose to Lot something that He knew that the folly of Lot's heart (folly perhaps long cherished) would welcome.

The proposal *was* welcomed. "Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar." Such was the scene presented to the eye of Lot. It was like the garden of the Lord—like Eden. But it was *not*

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Eden. The beauty which Lot beheld was but a garment of outward loveliness resting upon something in which God had ceased to delight. Those plains, however lovely, were but part of a fallen earth, groaning under the iniquity of the inhabitants thereof, and ripening for judgment. They might seem in loveliness to rival Eden; but so did Egypt—"as the garden of the Lord, *like the land of Egypt.*" It is Egypt still—the land of unregenerate man—a land not of blessing, but of judgment. Nor was it otherwise with the fair-watered plain of Jordan. Clouds of wrath were gathering that were soon about to burst upon it.

Others before Lot had been attracted by its loveliness, and had come and dwelt there. There were cities called "cities of the plain," and their characteristics were derived not from Eden in its innocency, but from Sodom in its abominations. This was the sphere that Lot chose for his habitation—for this he separated himself from Abraham, God's servant and God's friend. "Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east; and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abraham dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent towards Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." Was Lot ignorant of the character of Sodom? Did he not know that the men of

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Sodom were "wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly?" Doubtless he knew it well! The iniquity of Sodom was not hidden: it was manifested, and had come abroad. Yet Lot feared not to draw nigh to that abyss of evil. He feared not to be brought into its presence. He chose it for himself as his near neighbour. What else could be expected? He who has ceased to feel the joy and the comfort of the near presence of good, may be expected to have his sensibilities proportionably deadened as respects contiguity to evil. Lot had failed to value, as he should have valued, the blessedness of fellowship with Abraham: it was not likely, therefore, that he would estimate as he ought, the sin of approximation to Sodom. For the sake of his flocks and herds, and the fair well-watered plain, he was content to leave the light, and peace, and truth, of the tent and altar of Abraham, and to draw nigh to the habitation of those who, because of the greatness of their wickedness, were about "to be set forth as an example of everlasting fire, suffering vengeance."

There could have been little in the sight of his flocks and herds, or in the beauty of the plain of Jordan *really* to comfort the soul of Lot as he went on journeying towards Sodom. He might, possibly, have occupied himself with these things; but they could not really comfort him. The pilgrim and the stranger can draw no true consolation from any thing in which his

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conscience finds no token of the sanction and approval of his God. Lot had little of this joy: but mark the contrasted place of Abraham. No sooner had Lot departed than God drew near to Abraham to comfort and to encourage him. "And the Lord said unto Abraham, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth: so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered. Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee."

Long time had passed, and many a bitter sorrow had been known by Abraham since God had last spoken to him after this manner. His heart was, no doubt, sorrowful (for he must have felt the departure of his kinsman) when his loneliness was thus cheered by the voice of his heavenly Friend. The gift promised was precious, but more precious was the love that gave it. The promised gift too was future and was to be long delayed, but the love was present, and it was *faithful* love. Abraham knew it as that which *had* watched over him and *would* watch over him still, until all its designs of blessing were to the full accomplished.

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How sweet such love, and how needful such comfort to one who had to wait in patience of hope for joys yet distant, and has in the meanwhile to prove the sorrow of being a stranger and a pilgrim in a world where evil reigns—a world where the dark impress of Sodom or of Egypt is found stamped upon all the ways and works of man! Long has it thus been; yet thus it shall not always be. We, even as Abraham, look forward to an hour when "the sovereignty of the world shall become the sovereignty of our God and of His Christ"—when evil shall no longer reign, and they who "destroy the earth" shall be themselves destroyed. The land promised to Abraham is Immanuel's land. It shall yet be "the joy of all lands." God's delight shall be in it. An excellency of beauty which Lot's fair-watered plain of Jordan never knew, shall overspread it. The taint of Sodom or of Egypt shall never come on it. Its people "shall be all righteous." The character and the ways of Abraham, and of a greater than Abraham, shall be reflected in them. They shall be watched over for good, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. For these things we still wait, and as we look upon Israel's and the world's misery and evil, and hear creation's groan, we are taught to say, "Oh, that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When the Lord bringeth back the captivity of His people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad."

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But whilst this light of heavenly love was visiting the tent of Abraham, how different the experience of him who was no longer, what he once had been, the associate of Abraham in his sorrows and in his joys! The loveliness of nature and all the luxuriance of nature's gifts encompassed the tents of Lot, but no voice from heaven—no approving messenger from above approached his dwelling. He had pitched his tent towards Sodom. He had not as yet entered it, to dwell in it, but he had drawn sufficiently nigh to be associated with it in its perils. A storm which Lot knew not of, was preparing to sweep over Sodom and those fair plains of beauty in which Lot had sought his rest. It came suddenly, and Lot was overtaken by it. He and his wife, and all that he had, flocks and herds, men-servants and women-servants, gold and silver, were all swept away. Lot had leaned upon Sodom, and with Sodom he fell. He was not only stripped of all that he had, but he was himself a captive. Such was the portion he had gained to himself by quitting the side of Abraham. He had loved his flocks and herds, and he had wished perhaps for more freedom of action than association with Abraham would allow; but he had scarcely entered on the liberty of his self-chosen path when he lost everything, and became himself a prisoner and a slave.

But blessings that we contemn, God can, in sovereign grace, preserve: links which we carelessly

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or presumptuously weaken, He can prevent from being utterly broken. So was it here. The link that had bound Abraham and Lot together was not one that could be destroyed. It had been formed not on the ground of mere natural friendship, or natural affinity. Lot had followed Abraham, because Abraham was called of God. The link formed between them was formed, not in the power of nature, but of the Spirit. It was formed of God in the power of eternal life, and therefore it was a link that could not be severed. Accordingly, it was found to be fast and firm in this day of calamity and need. As soon as Abraham heard of Lot's captivity he flew to his rescue. He of whom we never read before as having handled spear or shield, went forth with his little band to encounter those mighty hosts before whom five kings with their armies had fled or fallen. But Abraham feared not. He trusted in God, and God was with him. He fought and he overcame, and Lot was rescued and all that he had. Captivity was taken captive, and the cry of anguish gave place to the song of thanksgiving and victory.

It was an hour of peculiar gladness and honour to Abraham. Not only had he the joy of rescuing Lot, and of knowing that he had fulfilled the will of God in rescuing him, but his return "from the slaughter of the kings" was the occasion of a fresh manifestation of blessing

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towards him from God. Nor was the expression of the Divine approval confined to the bestowal of blessing on Abraham. The bestowal of God's benediction on Abraham was made the occasion of withdrawing still further the veil that as yet hung over the future, and granting another indication and pledge of the blessing that was in due time to be revealed in Christ. The nature and fulness of the blessings secured to us by the everlasting priesthood of our Melchisedek we shall not appreciate fully till we know even as we are known; yet in measure we apprehend them now, and have reason daily to thank God that He was pleased when honouring Abraham's faithfulness, to make it the occasion of increasing our spiritual riches, and opening for us in the wilderness a new well of heavenly comfort, the waters whereof shall flow on even for ever and ever. The words, "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedek," are words which will constitute the subject of our eternal joy in heaven; and they are founded on the circumstances which attended this day of Abraham's triumph. What joy to the servants of God when the reception of praise and honour by themselves is made the means of opening up fresh springs of blessing for others!

Melchisedek was in himself nothing. He was a mere man; but he was a *typical* man, appointed to foreshadow the eternal Son of God. In Genesis we, for the most part, find the parentage and

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descent of the personages spoken of carefully recorded. But Melchisedek is an exception to this rule. The book of Genesis makes no mention of his birth, or parentage, or descent. He is, says the Apostle, "ungenealogised" (*αγενεαλογητος*). Without *recorded* parentage (*απατωρ και αμητωρ*), with nothing recorded respecting those who had preceded, or those who should succeed him, he appears suddenly, like an unknown stranger, on the scene. It is this silence as to his parentage and descendants that constitutes him *typically* (not actually) an eternal person, "having neither beginning of days, nor end of life," but made to resemble the Eternal Son of God, as abiding a Priest in perpetuity. Melchisedek, therefore, as a typically eternal Person, foreshadowed Him who being a *truly* eternal person brings the eternity and all the excellency of that which He personally is into the offices which He assumes. In human arrangements high office gives dignity to the person, but in the case of the Eternal Son, it is the Person who brings potency into, and adds dignity to the office. Kingship too was associated with the priesthood of Melchisedek. As a priest he was typically one who knew God, having acquaintance with His mind, His purposes and His truth: as a king he was as one endowed with power to give effect to that which as a priest, he knew. It is meet that one who has all knowledge of God, should be invested with all power

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to act and rule for God, and such an one typically (but only typically) was Melchisedek. He was king of righteousness and peace. "King of righteousness" was not his title, but his name. Anti-typically it directs to the Person of Him who having, by His service for us on earth, secured for us a standing in everlasting righteousness before God, still maintains and gives effect to the principles of God's holiness, taking care that none of those principles should be tarnished, and yet protecting *us*, and securing to *us* everlasting peace. Accordingly, Melchisedek, the king of righteousness, ruled in and from Salem, the city of peace. Thence, in the power of righteousness and of peace, as one typically eternal and typically divine, he came forth, the priest of the Most High God, to bless Abraham, saying, "Blessed be Abraham of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth." And after having thus blessed Abraham, he ministered to him "bread," the symbol of that which giveth strength: and "wine," the symbol of that which giveth joy: and Abraham on his part recognised the giver of these blessings as *typically* divine, for "he gave him tithes of all."

Of the three aspects of Priesthood which the Scripture presents to us this is the first. The next was, when Aaron, arrayed in garments of glory and beauty, entered into the sanctuary with the names of Israel engraven on precious

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stones, to be presented on his shoulders and on his breastplate, before the Lord: the third and last was, when annually on the Day of Atonement, he entered the Holiest of all, clothed in linen garments only, to make atonement with blood carried within the veil. The first may be termed the Priesthood of blessing: the second, the Priesthood of presentation: the last, the Priesthood of atonement.

Yet that form of Priesthood of which the Scripture speaks to us first, is the last in order of application. Before we can stand as the recognised recipients of everlasting blessing from the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, we must be counted worthy of being presented in the sanctuary, comely in a comeliness that is not our own; and before we can be so presented, it is needful that everlasting atonement should be made for all our transgressions and all our sins. The link in the chain of grace that finally united us to God in the fulness of all blessing, must be preceded by other links that reach down to us in the distance of our sin and misery. Accordingly, He who is our High Priest for ever, not according to the transitory "*order*" of Aaron, but according to the eternal "*order*" of Melchisedek, hath not failed to embody in that priesthood all that the Aaronic types indicated as needful to the priestly office. It was needful that "eternal redemption" should be secured for His believing

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people by atoning blood being offered. Accordingly, on the Cross "He offered up Himself." It was a priestly oblation whereby He accomplished and terminated all that the ministration of Aaron on the Day of Atonement typically foreshadowed. In the 24th verse of the ninth of Hebrews we further read of Jesus, that He has "entered not into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear (*νυν εμφανισθηναι*) in the presence of God for us." This is the Priesthood of *presentation*, typified when Aaron, arrayed in his own proper garments of glory and beauty, presented himself before God as the representative of Israel, and as their sustainer in peace, acceptance, and honour. All the efficacy therefore of the Aaronic services is embodied in the Priesthood of our Melchisedek, and it is on the ground of His first having atoned for us, and then having presented us in peace and in acceptance, that He comes forth from God to pronounce over us words of blessing, and to minister to us strength and joy.

I say "comes forth from God"—for this, let it be observed, was distinctive of the relation of Melchisedek to Abraham. He *came forth* to meet Abraham. He *brought out* bread and wine. He *ministered it to* Abraham, and pronounced on him blessing. Melchisedek bestowed: Abraham received. It was not as in the Priesthood of atonement; nor even as in the priesthood of pre-

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sentation. In both those forms of priesthood the face of the priest is directed towards God as bringing or presenting something *to Him*; but in the Melchisedek ministration the face of the priest is turned toward *us*. He comes forth to minister to us; not indeed as one who had neglected the claims of God, but as One who having first satisfied those claims, comes forth from the place of secured and established righteousness and peace, to minister to us as brought within the circle of righteousness and peace. It is here not a question only of what our Melchisedek has been, or is, towards God, but of that which He is by God's appointment towards us. He has been, and He is a minister for us towards God; but He is also a minister from God to us. His being a Priest "after the order of Melchisedek" secures to us, therefore, an *eternal ministration* of blessing.

But there are gradations even in the scale of our highest blessings. To be here, whilst yet in earth, the subjects of a ministration from Him, fixed and unchangeable as that which the Melchisedek Priesthood secures, is a high character of blessing; and such was the kind of blessing received by Abraham in this typical scene. But there is a higher kind of blessing to be in due season received both by Abraham and by ourselves, from the hands of our great Melchisedek. He will come forth not merely to bless us from

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the place of His own blessedness, but to take us to that place of blessedness—to take us to the true, the heavenly Salem, there to minister to us of a strength and joy that earth knows not of: causing us to share as joint-heirs with Him, His glory; causing us in new circumstances to know what it is to receive out of His fulness. Ministration to us in earth is blessed, but the unhindered ministration of His grace and power to us in Heaven, how much more blessed!

Nor must we forget that the meeting of Melchisedek with Abraham as he returned from the slaughter of the kings, points typically onward to a bright and blessed moment in the hitherto dark history of earth, when Israel, suddenly forgiven, and suddenly made triumphant over their enemies, shall stand like Abraham in his day—heirs of the promises, and chosen of God, to serve and glorify Him in the earth. But the day in which Israel shall be delivered, will be a day of calamity and woe, "a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time." Half of them will, like Lot, have been carried captive, and the residue that will be left will be about to be devoured; for their enemies shall say, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance." But suddenly God shall interfere, and will forgive and deliver, and strengthen Israel, and cause them to

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triumph gloriously, and make them His nation in the earth whereby He shall subdue and govern all nations. "If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say; if it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us: then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us: then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul: then the proud waters had gone over our soul. Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped. Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." Such will be their song of triumph in that day; and it is then that the true Melchisedek will meet them as "the Priest of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth;" and bless them alike in body and in soul, and bring them under the ministration of abiding grace for ever.

But whilst the Melchisedek Priesthood of our Lord throws its chief and *brightest* light upon the future, we must not forget the wondrous blessing of being placed under its ministration now. We are pilgrims and strangers in the earth, weak and needy, surrounded by many enemies and by many dangers; needing, therefore, every moment, the constant ministration of grace; needing that

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the abiding relation of the Lord should be that of one who ministereth to us from time to time bread and wine (that which strengtheneth and that which cheereth), and so holding our souls in life. And such is the relation in which God, through Christ, stands to all His believing people. As we can say, speaking of ourselves naturally, that we in common with our fellow-men are sustained, from day to day, in the possession and exercise of all our natural faculties by the immediate power of God—"for in Him" (as men) "we live, and move, and have our" (natural) "being;" so, as believers, we stand in a new and spiritual relation to God, and are made the subjects of a perpetual and unfailing ministration of His power in respect of that which we are as created anew in Christ. Every day He reneweth, in some degree or other, our spiritual strength: every day He ministereth something of comfort, or something that is for healthfulness to the new man. Not more sure His bestowal of the air that we breathe, or the light that we behold. And when our natural health and strength shall fail, and when mere nature shall be sustained no longer, then it is that we shall chiefly prove the power of this Melchisedek ministration, and find in the new and to us strange world of glory, that He is as able to minister a strength and a power of life suited to heaven, as He is to minister that which is now needed in the circumstances of

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earth. Then it is that we shall, with understanding hearts, say, "of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, are all things."

But to return to the history of Lot. We might have supposed that the sorrows and dangers through which he had passed, would have driven him back to the side of Abraham, with whom God so manifestly was. Yet nothing that experience teaches, unless the lesson be accompanied by the direct action of the grace of God, softens the obduracy of nature, even in a saint. Lot returned not to Abraham. Sodom, not Abraham's tent, became his dwelling-place. Before, he had "pitched his tent toward Sodom:" yet he had not entered it to dwell there. But now Sodom had new attractions in his eyes, for he would enter it, no longer as an unknown wanderer, but as one illustrious in the sight of Sodom and its king; for to the kinsman of Lot, Sodom and its king owed their deliverance. The honour of Sodom was now added to the temptations of its fruitful plain; and Lot's heart again yielded to the lure. He became a dweller in Sodom, and with the people of Sodom he contracted affinity. His daughters, with the exception of two (and they became depraved), married in Sodom; and with Sodom they perished. In vain, when Lot was at last aroused by the close approach of judgment, he exhorted them and his sons-in-law to flee. They refused to listen: they scoffed at

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the warning, and they were consumed. His wife too, became a pillar of salt. The whole annals of the family of Lot are full of sin, death, and judgment. Moab and Ammon, the accursed enemies of Israel, sprang from him. His household seemed strangers to the fear of the Lord, and with the single exception of himself, sin seemed to rule over all within his dwelling.

We do indeed know that he was himself preserved in uprightness. We have the sure warrant of Scripture for saying that he was "righteous," even in the midst of the men of Sodom, and "vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds." The best thing, and in one sense the happiest thing that he gained for himself, was vexation of soul; for it marked him as belonging unto God. But all his vexation was in vain. None heard his admonitions: none yielded to his reproofs. He chose to dwell in the atmosphere of moral death: his own soul was vexed: the hearts of his children hardened, and none were gained unto God. Spiritually, no condition could be more full of sadness. And as to outward prosperity, he had wished to gain for himself the rest of the fair and fruitful plain; he had sought the comforts and protection of Sodom. For this he had left the side of Abraham. For this he had abandoned the present guidance of his God, but all that he had gained—all that he had coveted was wrested from his grasp, and what he

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finally secured for himself was a desolate cave in a mountain, where his pilgrimage, as far as it is traced in Scripture, ends—ends in foul dishonour and sin. And yet Lot belonged unto God. But God permitted him to wander, that he might be taught, and that we might be taught, that it is a bitter and an evil thing to quit the separate pilgrim place, and to despise that present guidance of God and of His Truth by which alone our steps can be guided into ways of honour and of peace.

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Jacob's History in Genesis XXVIII.

WE have already considered the character of the path trodden by Abraham, in whom first the family of faith were called into avowed and recognised separation in the earth. The Lord had said unto Abraham, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee." Abraham obeyed: he separated himself from all that he had been commanded to leave, and "went out, not knowing whither he went." In him the history of the thus separated family of faith opened brightly. There were, indeed, occasions on which even Abraham failed, and once most grievously (for there is none perfect save One); yet, for the most part, he leaned on God trustfully, waited for His guidance, and obeyed it. Although encompassed by many dangers, he nevertheless found, by confiding in God, a path of practical peace where others, like Lot, earned for themselves disaster and bitter sorrows. The new day, therefore, of faith's pilgrimage, as inaugurated by Abraham, opened brightly. Yet the brightness

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of the fairest morning often wanes. Even if clouds and blackness come not, mists arise, and darken. Though the sun ceases not to shine, it may shine with feeble and intermittent ray.

In the histories of Isaac and of Jacob we look in vain for the simplicity and vigour of the faith of Abraham. Although they too had embraced the promises and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and declared plainly that they sought a heavenly country, yet in their history, as compared with that of Abraham, there was evidently far less of the victory of faith. Their conflicts and struggles were less dissociated from selfish interests; there was less single-eyed service to God and dependence upon Him; less abstinence (especially in the case of Jacob) from plans and devisings of their own. Nevertheless, amidst the many indications of increasing weakness, we trace as distinctly as ever, the faithfulness, and long-suffering, and grace of God.

Whenever any of the family of faith are brought into close connection with the unsanctified vigour and energy of others, they stand in a position of no little danger. In such circumstances it peculiarly needs that the action of faith should be strong and steady in the soul, in order to escape the being entangled and overcome. So was it with Isaac in his relation to Esau. Surrounded by many enemies, and not unfrequently involved in danger, Isaac, so far as he viewed things not in

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faith, but naturally, could not but recognise in the strength and energy of Esau, a help very available in times of pressure and need. Besides which, there is always a certain attractiveness in energy. Naturally, we admire daring, activity, and skill. Judged of in the light of mere natural feeling, a life like that of Esau contrasts favourably with one of dull ignoble quietude, diversified by no incidents that interest or enliven, and attended by few results that gratify our tastes, or subserve our advantage. The enterprise and energy of Esau, who was "a cunning hunter, a man of the field" (Gen. xxv. 27), could provide for Isaac the savoury meat which the quietude of Jacob, who was "a plain man, dwelling in tents," failed to supply: and when the attainment of such food became to Isaac a primary and absorbing object of desire, he was likely to set his affections upon Esau and to forget Jacob. But the blessing of God—that blessing which had made Abraham and Isaac what they were, that blessing on which all their hopes and anticipations for themselves and for their seed for ever, hung, the covenant blessing of Abraham had, by God Himself, been placed, not upon the head of Esau, but of Jacob. Before their birth it was said unto Rebekah, their mother, "the elder shall serve the younger:" and this, Isaac knew. Nevertheless nature prevailed. Isaac viewed Esau, not with the eye of faith, but of natural feeling. He delighted in him in whom God delighted not.

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Jacob, notwithstanding his failings, was one in whom faith was. But Esau was not of faith.

Rebekah, on the other hand, loved Jacob. The object of her love was rightly chosen; but what was her motive? Did she love him because God had loved him, and given him faith, and made him the heir of the promise; or was Jacob dear to her mainly on natural grounds, because of natural affinities and sympathies? Could it be said of Rebekah that she had held her natural feelings in check, and that she had viewed Jacob steadily as the child of promise and grace, and *on that account* loved him?

The course of her action sufficiently answers this question. If she had viewed Jacob steadily in the light of faith, she would not have sought by subtilty and deceit to secure for him a blessing which God had covenanted to give. No doubt the concentration of the affections of Isaac upon Esau, and the danger that thereby seemed to threaten the succession of Jacob to the blessing, had caused great anxiety to Rebekah. Believers, especially when closely connected, act potently on each other for good, or for evil. Strength in Isaac would have strengthened Rebekah; but his weakness weakened her: it caused her disquietude, and became to her a snare. It was nothing strange that she should feel anxiety; but she might have cast her anxiety on God. She might have waited upon Him. But she waited not: or if for a time

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she had waited, she grew weary of her waiting, and in impatience resolved to act. Her action was unbidden (that was in itself an evil), but it was not only unbidden—it was unlawful likewise. It was an act of deceit. She planned to deceive Isaac, and she *did* deceive him, and she involved Jacob, who acted with her, in the sin. She gained the object of her immediate desire: the blessing was secured for Jacob, but bitter sorrow followed in result.

The substitution of one sorrow for another (which is all that believers gain by unrighteous scheming) is not deliverance from sorrow: and this Rebekah soon found. She had aroused (and what else could have been expected?) the fury of Esau, and he was ready, like another Cain, to shed the blood of his brother. "The days of mourning," said he, "for my father are at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob." Rebekah discerned the outward danger from Esau and the moral danger from the daughters of Heth that threatened Jacob, and having quitted the path of faith and not repented, she was unable to cast her sorrows on God, and consequently she planned again. Abraham, in his old age, when it was proposed to him that Isaac should, for a season, quit Canaan and revisit the land of his fathers, exclaimed with holy energy, "Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again." Was Isaac to quit the land of promise and to sojourn, even temporarily, in the country out of which God had summoned him? The soul

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of Abraham shrank from the very thought. But Isaac and Rebekah had no such fear; or if they had, they steeled their hearts against it. They chose that which probably seemed to them the lesser of two sorrows, and resolved to send Jacob back into a land which was not *the* land in which God had promised either guidance or blessing. Jacob was sent away from Canaan. Unbidden and uncounselled of God, he went forth as a solitary wanderer, to meet dangers which subtilty and wilfulness had earned. Rebekah, in losing him, lost the light of her eyes. It was a final separation; she saw him no more. Her sorrows also were self-earned. They sprang from her own tortuous schemes; and of all sorrows, self-earned sorrows are, to a sensitive heart, the hardest to bear.

We can scarcely imagine any circumstances of loneliness more complete than those in which Jacob found himself on the first day of his departure from the home of his youth. Night overtook him as he journeyed onward, and he lay down in the solitary wilderness with a stone for his pillow. We read, indeed, of others who were driven as outcasts into the desert. Moses was driven into the wilderness, and so was David; but they were involved in these sorrows by trusting in and obeying God. His voice had called them into the path they trod; and the consciousness of His approval sustained their spirits. The wilderness was to David

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the place of thanksgiving and praise. "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is. . . . Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips." Such were the words of the Psalmist of Israel "when he was in the wilderness of Judah." The wilderness was to him a place of joyful communion with God. But it was otherwise with Jacob. The path on which he had entered was a self-chosen path. He had opened up for himself a way by means of subtilty and deceit. He had, unbidden, placed himself in the wilderness, and if he had received according to his deserts, he would have been left to the consequences of his folly.

Yet, notwithstanding all his crookedness and subtilty (evils for which God designed abundantly to chasten him), Jacob was really one in whom faith dwelt. God had chosen him for Himself. The birthright which Esau had despised, he had not despised: he counted it most precious. To him the blessing pronounced over the heads of Abraham and Isaac had descended; and his soul valued it. As the inheritor, therefore, of the promises, he was remembered by God on this first night of his sorrowful wandering. We do not read

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of Jacob calling upon God; but God in faithfulness and in grace remembered him.

As he slept God drew near to him in vision. Jacob "dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Such was the sight —such the words which suddenly met the eye and the ear of the unworthy wanderer—but yet a wanderer whom God's grace had separated, and was about more distinctly to separate, unto Himself. Jacob was not of the world: there lay buried in his bosom other principles which were in due season to be developed, and which proved him to be one of those strangers and pilgrims in the earth, "of whom the world was not worthy." Whilst Jacob was a wanderer in the wilderness the world was advancing, even as it still con-

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tinues to advance, in its course of prospering evil. There were teeming nations, and mighty kings, and peopled cities—Nineveh and Babylon, Egypt and Damascus—yet it was not amongst any of these that the voice of God was heard pronouncing His covenant blessing. It was pronounced in the desert over the head of a lonely wanderer, whose only symbol of strength was the staff with which he journeyed; whose only worthiness was found in that which grace had provided for him in Another. The world knew nothing of this pilgrim —they knew nothing of these methods of grace —they knew nothing of this vision of promised glory, and had they known it, they would have known it only to despise. For since, they *have* heard of these things. They have heard of the separate path of faith in which God blesses—they have heard of the methods of His grace through Christ—they have heard of the glory in earth and heaven that is to be revealed in fulfilment of this vision that Jacob saw—they have heard of the doorway into these mercies through that One only "name under heaven given amongst men whereby we must be saved"—but Esau-like, the world despises it all. They count none of these things to be equivalent to a mess of pottage. Shall present advantage, say they, be relinquished for the uncertainty of futurity? So, even in the professing Church, unbelief reasons. It hears of the vision of Jacob, but understands it not. It cares

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not to understand it. It slumbers carelessly on, and will continue to slumber on until the promised hour of fulfilment comes, and then the awaking will be too late.

We see not yet Heaven opened, and a reconciled earth placed under the promised ministration of blessing from on high, for creation still groans. We see not yet Immanuel's Land (that Land on which Jacob slept, and about which he received the promise)—we see it not yet made, "the joy of all lands," and peopled with Jacob's seed like the sand that is on the sea-shore for multitude—themselves blessed, and made to others a blessing. For these things we still wait. Yet we know that He who is the true ladder—the true link of connection between heaven and earth—He whose service and sacrifice have supplied the means whereby at last earth shall be connected with Heaven in recipiency of blessing—we know that He has already stood on earth, and that over His head Heaven has already been opened in attestation of approval and complacent delight, and we know that because of Him, it is virtually still open in peace and reconciliation, over the heads of those who, through faith, are His. Yet, although the eye of faith does in this sense regard Heaven as even now "opened," yet no present ministration of grace towards the hidden family of faith can fulfil this vision; for it speaks of *manifested* glory; it speaks of the angels of God being *seen*

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ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. It will not be accomplished until Israel and the nations brought into the recognition of that redemption which at present they despise, and until the Church of the first-born, raised in the first resurrection and associated with the glory of Him who was seen at the head of the ladder, shall severally occupy their appointed spheres in the coming Kingdom of God. For that we still wait, saying, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth, as it is done in heaven."

Little, however did Jacob understand the vision, or appreciate the nature of the promised blessing. Even the promise of personal preservation (a subject which at that time, as appears from the vow which he vowed, occupied his thoughts more than any other)—not even God's promise of personal protection seems to have arrested his attention. Amazement and terror were the prevailing feelings of his soul. "He was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Whilst pursuing his subtle schemes he had practically lived far away from God; and now suddenly and unexpectedly he had been brought into His near presence. The God of glory had met him; and although He had met him in grace, and loving-kindness, and mercy, yet to Jacob in his then present condition of heart even such a meeting was terrible. Unawares he had

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lighted, he said, on the house or dwelling-place of God, and he pronounced the place "*dreadful.*" How different the manner in which Abraham had been wont to welcome the approach of God.

But Jacob, although neither self-possessed, nor happy, was under the power of a hand that was guiding as well as preserving him. Little aware of the meaning of his act, yet doubtless under the leading of God who afterwards sanctioned the name that Jacob gave, Jacob took the stone that had served as his pillow, and set it up for a memorial, and poured oil upon it, and called the place Bethel, that is, the house or dwelling-place of God. Our retrospective faith can still look back upon that anointed stone, and see in it the pledge of blessings and glories yet to come.

It tells us of that coming hour when the true Shepherd, "the Stone of Israel," shall be manifested in earth, not to be "rejected," not to be "stumbled over," not to be "despised," but to be recognised and honoured as the anointed stone to whom all heavenly grace pertaineth—"anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows." As such, that Stone shall then be established in the earth, securing, in virtue of its own excellency, a place on which the foot of the ladder of blessing shall abidingly rest: nor shall the progress of the blessing be staid until the whole earth is changed into one great Beth-el—a place meet for

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the habitation of the God of Heaven. That, however, will not be in the millennial age, but in "the new earth"—in "the dispensation of the fulness of times." It is true, indeed, that in the millennial age, Zion and Jerusalem, and Immanuel's Land, will begin to be known as Beth-el. Yet nothing in the millennial age will supply the full antitype of that word of blessing. The full accomplishment will be found only when God shall say, "Behold, I make all things new, and the Tabernacle of God shall be with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." Not till then will all the blessings so long typified—so long promised, be seen in their perfected and enduring form. The earth, and men in it, must be divested of the Adamic form of their being, and be changed into suitability to the Glory of the Second Man, the Last Adam, before an abiding resting-place can be found among them for the full glory of the God of Heaven.

But although the setting up and establishment of the anointed stone in connexion with the vision of glory that preceded, directs our thoughts to a still future hour when the night of pilgrimage shall have passed and the joy of the morning have come, yet we must not forget the relation which that stone had borne to Jacob during the midnight hour. It had been that on which he as the pilgrim—the true though un-

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worthy inheritor of the promises, had rested. It had been his pillow. He had leaned on it his weary head, and had found its support firm, steadfast, abiding. Is it otherwise with "the Stone of Israel"? Soon the hour of His manifested glory will come. Soon He shall be recognised and owned as the anointed Stone at the dawn of the coming morning. But during the present night has He not been known, and is He not known, by His people, as the One to whom they come weary and heavy laden, and find in Him rest, firm, stable, abiding? If He is steadfast in all His other relations to His people, He is steadfast likewise in this.

Jacob, however, understood not these things. There was at that time in him no such comprehensiveness of knowledge, or faith, or hope, as could grasp the prospects of the future, or even appreciate his present relation to the God who had drawn nigh to bless him. Little aware of the typical meaning of his act, he seems to have set up the pillar chiefly with the view of satisfying a heart ill at ease, by doing something to show that he recognised the power and majesty of God. And after he had performed this act and pronounced the holy name of Beth-el, he also vowed a vow, saying, "If God will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in

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peace; then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

In these words, as indeed in most of the words and deeds of Jacob, there was clearly the expression, to a certain extent, of faith and of reverential regard to God. In scarcely any recorded act of Jacob can it be said that he forgot God, or was unmindful of the preciousness of His promises and favour. When he purchased the birthright by a mess of pottage, and afterward when he deceived Isaac and obtained the blessing, it was because he prized the birthright and blessing which Esau, as "a profane person," despised. Yet though we scarcely ever find Jacob altogether forgetting God, though we almost always trace some element of faith in his actings, yet it is also true, that we scarcely ever find the absence of some plan or contrivance of his own. Fearing to act without relying on God, he seems equally to have feared the not relying on himself. The final objects that he kept before him were such as faith supplied; but the means whereby they were to be attained were to be determined by his own selection, and to be provided from his own resources. His faith prevented his path from being altogether a backward one; but his self-reliance and subtilty made it a tortuous one—one, therefore, attended by many sorrows. "Few and evil," said he at a

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subsequent period, "have the days of my pilgrimage been."

In the present instance the word "if," with which he prefaces his vow, seems to stand in strange contrast with the unconditional words of promise which a moment before had been pronounced by the lips of God. It would seem as if Jacob, in the haste of his own activity, had given no heed to the gracious words addressed to him by God. God had said, "Behold I am with thee, and *will* keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and *will* bring thee again into this land; for I *will not* leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Here were words of positive, unconditional, promise. It was an absolute promise of personal preservation—the point on which Jacob was so anxious, and it was the appendage to another promise of far higher moment —"in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." It might have been expected that such words as these would have arrested the mind of Jacob, and made him cease from his own activities, and caused him, for the moment at least, to view himself as the weak unworthy, unprofitable recipient of the undeserved, but sure and faithful mercies of a covenant God. Activity and anxiety might have been supposed to give place, at least for a season, to thankful, calm, passive recipiency. When Abraham was addressed with similar words of promise he fell on his face

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in silent thankfulness and adoration. He made no mention of himself, or of his own powers; much less did he hint at such a thought as returning anything in the way of compensation to God. God stood before him as One who was in sovereign grace *giving:* no place, therefore, beseemed Abraham save that of humbly and thankfully receiving. "Being strong in faith, he gave glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform." But it was far otherwise with Jacob. "IF," said he, "God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee." Not only did he place under the uncertainty of that "IF" the very things that God had positively promised to bestow, but he seems to have desired to enter into a kind of stipulation with God. He seems to have valued so highly his own services as to have deemed them a kind of compensation to God for His favour. Did Jacob indeed mean that his owning God as his God was to be made conditional upon his receiving from God the desired mercies? Did he think that the establishment of God's House in the earth was to be *his* act, just as the set-

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ting up the pillar of memorial had been his act? Did he indeed think that a giving a *tenth* of his substance to God was a sufficient return—a worthy return for all the goodness he was to receive? Did he really look upon his services as compensatory equivalents? Scarcely in his reflective moments would Jacob have accepted these inferences from his words. He had been terrified. He had said, "How dreadful is this place." He was not, therefore, self-possessed: natural feelings were working in his bosom; and when nature is working strongly in a believer's soul, the utterances of his lips are not always to be interpreted as conveying strictly the true, radical feeling of the heart. Nevertheless, it is very evident that the tone of his spirit was little in accordance with that of Abraham when he stood before God as the thankful recipient of blessings unmerited and unearned: little in accordance, too, with the tone of his own spirit, when, at the conclusion of his pilgrimage, after years of travail and sorrow had rolled over his head, he leaned, weak and feeble, on the top of his staff, and bowed his head and worshipped. It was the last picture of Jacob. So he concludes his pilgrimage—so he quits earth. He speaks not, he thinks not then of anything that he had rendered unto God: he thinks of what God had rendered, and would render unto him. But on this, the commencement of his long pilgrimage, it was far otherwise. There was in him a sturdiness of strength

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that needed to be subdued by many a lesson. And those lessons were to be given. The same grace that had chosen him, and had met him in that wilderness, and was now sending him on his way laden with promises of blessing, was also about to discipline and to chasten him. Long indeed was Jacob in learning the lesson. Long did his unsubdued natural energy continue to work. Long did he persevere in marking for himself his paths, and afterwards looking to God; expecting God to follow him rather than submitting himself to follow God. In the case of Abraham, the hand of God marked the path to be trodden, and manifestly sustained and comforted in it: whereas in the case of Jacob, the agency of God was, as it were, hidden under the greater prominence of Jacob, and employed frequently in counteracting agencies that Jacob had called into activity against himself. We do not, therefore, find the same halo of brightness, nor the same presence of peace in the path of Jacob that was seen in that of Abraham. We do not find Jacob called "the friend of God." He trusted indeed in God, but how he likewise trusted in his own energies we shall see in the history that follows. To be earnest, and to delight in putting forth (when duty calls) all our energies without confiding in those energies, without glorifying our own powers, is no easy lesson for the children of faith to learn: and Jacob had not learned it. Nevertheless, he was not finally permitted to glorify his

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own strength. "The worm Jacob" long sought to magnify itself; but it learned at last to know its nothingness, and glories now in being exalted in Another's righteousness, and in Another's strength. Blessed will be the day when the nation to whom his name has been transmitted, shall have learned the same lesson, and shall have been taught to say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." When humbled Israel shall in faith say these words, "truth shall spring out of the earth: and righteousness shall look down from heaven."

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Jacob's History in Genesis XXIX., &c.

ABRAHAM and Jacob were alike heirs of the promises of God. For the sake of those promises, which their faith saw afar off and greeted, they "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Knowing that they were compassed by difficulties and dangers, they looked to God as their refuge. In Him they hoped: in Him they confided. Yet, how different was the manner of their trust.

Abraham was one who *waited* upon God. Although quick and vigorous in action, when action was required, he was careful in his actings *to follow*, not *to go before*, God. From God he sought not only protection and deliverance, but also control and direction. He had learned to say; "my Father, thou art the guide of my way." He mistrusted plans of his own:—schemes of subtlety and deceit his soul abhorred. He looked to God to appoint, and to God to provide; and accordingly, "Jehovah-Jireh" was the name under which he was, in an especial manner, permitted to prove the faithfulness and power and loving-kindness of the Lord. Honour, therefore, and triumph, as well as pro-

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tective power attended his steps; and he was called "the friend of God."

Far different was the course of Jacob. Although he, too, trod the path of faith, yet, he trod it as one who desired to be, as much as might be, the regulator of his own way. Without ever forgetting God, without ever ceasing to confide in Him, he yet confided also, and that greatly, in his own capacities; and seemed to delight in exalting his own actings into a kind of co-equality with those of God. Without a thought of separating himself from God—without dreaming of prosperity apart from God's favour and blessing, he was yet ever prone to manifest a certain independency of spirit and confidence in his own powers, by acting first, and then expecting God to follow. Fond of plans and subtle contrivances, he not unfrequently made his own way crooked; and then looked to God to rescue him from the difficulties and dangers in which he had involved himself. And although God, in the faithfulness of His love and mercy, abandoned not His servant, yet He caused him to know many sorrows. Straits, difficulties, and trials, accumulated on the path of Jacob—trials, indeed, from which he was from time to time extricated: but the trials of Jacob were, for the most part, not like the trials of Abraham, honourable in themselves and blessed; nor did the manner of the deliverance bring the same honour and glory unto God. So different may be the course of those,

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who are yet equally children of faith—equally heirs of the kingdom that is to be revealed.

When Abraham was asked whether his son should visit, for a season, the land of his forefathers—the land from which he had been called away, Abraham's soul shrank from the very thought. "Beware thou that thou bring not my son thither again: . . . . . only bring not my son thither again," was his twice repeated command. Accordingly, Isaac went not: Abraham's servant was sent. And mark the caution and godly fear with which he fulfilled his mission—how, like his master, he cast himself on God; and watched for tokens of direction from His hand. As he drew near and was about to enter the land to which he journeyed, he said: "O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham." And when the token which he sought was granted, in Rebekah doing that which he had asked that she might do—"the man, wondering at her, held his peace, to wit whether the Lord had made his journey prosperous or not." And when he found that he had indeed been guided to the house of his master's brethren, "the man bowed down his head and worshipped the Lord. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of His mercy and His truth: I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's bre-

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thren." And when he found that the object of his mission was attained, "he worshipped the Lord, bowing himself to the earth."

Contrast with this the course of Jacob. Unbidden by the Lord, and concurring with his mother in devising a method of escape from the danger which their own deceit and subtlety had caused, he quitted, apparently without one misgiving thought, the Land of Promise, and went back into the country from which God had separated *him* as well as his fathers. The words of Abraham were remembered not: nor do we read of any act that betokened acknowledgment of God. He had formed for himself a plan: he had devised for himself a means of escape from a near and threatening danger: and in the execution of this plan, all his thoughts and energies were absorbed. He rushed into the wilderness, and there found himself benighted and alone—and alone he would have remained, if God had not, in faithful mercy, met him and blessed him, and given him that wondrous vision of yet future glory, which Jacob did, after a manner, recognise and welcome; yet so as to show that his thoughts rested on that which *he* proposed to render unto God, far more than on the blessings which God covenanted to bestow *freely* upon him. The nature of those blessings, and their preciousness, it would seem that Jacob neither apprehended, nor endeavoured to apprehend.

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And when he drew near the end of his way, and was about to enter into that land from which he and his fathers had been delivered, we might have expected that, at such a moment, he would have peculiarly committed himself unto God. This Abraham's servant had done; although *his* absence from Canaan was caused by no sin, and his visit to the land of the stranger was to be but for a moment—his steps being soon about to be turned Canaan-ward again. But with Jacob it was far otherwise. Dangers, in which he had involved himself, had driven him from Canaan; and a long and sorrowful future awaited him in the land which he had chosen for a refuge; and yet, no supplications, like those of Abraham's servant, are recorded as having passed from his lips. Let it not, however, be supposed that he had either forsaken or forgotten God. Truly he remembered Him, and confided in His mercies; but he greatly confided in himself as well. He highly valued God's help; but he liked to receive it in the way of co-operation, rather than that God's power should manifest itself in the independency of its own sovereign greatness. As he had fought his way through many past difficulties, so he purposed to fight his way again through difficulties yet to come. A heart that relies much on its own resources, and looks to them as the great available means of present succour, will be likely, in the hour of danger, to be occupied mainly with itself; and will find

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it proportionably difficult to wait on and acknowledge God. Are there none to whom experience has taught this lesson—none who are ready to confess that they resemble Jacob far more than Abraham in their ways?

Jacob "came unto the land of the people of the east, and he looked and behold," etc. Such are the words which describe the first approach of Jacob to that land which was to be to him, for many years, a land, virtually, of sorrowful captivity. "*He looked*"—that is, he stood and scanned the scene before him; saw what it presented to his view; resolved on the course to be pursued; and acted. It was the *manner*, not the fact, of the look, that gave to it, its character: and we can scarcely be in doubt as to the manner—for how rapid was the action that followed; and there is no mention of God. What can be more contrasted than the mode in which Abraham's servant approached, and that in which Jacob entered, the same land, and the same family? The characteristic circumstances of the one, are utterly wanting in the other. There was no appeal unto God. Jacob went to the shepherds; questioned them; consulted them; found Rachel and Laban; was welcomed; and all seemed to prosper. Yet there was sorrow in store; and in due time the sorrow came. He had found, in Laban, a master rather than a friend—a master who was covetous, grasping, subtle, and had little, if any, of the fear of God; for he had in his house-

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hold, idols. And as Jacob had by subtilty prevailed, so was he now, by subtilty to suffer. Laban's craft deceived him. Seven years Jacob served for Rachel; but when the seven years were ended, Leah, and not Rachel, was given. And when at last Rachel came, strife and sorrow came with her. Servitude under the exacting covetousness of Laban; strife in his own household; the plans and contrivings of jealous rivalry there; toil by day, and watching by night, in summer heat, and in winter cold, and toil unrequited—such were the circumstances that gave to Jacob's life its character in the land which he had chosen for his refuge. And when at last, on the earnest appeal of Jacob, the heart of Laban relented, and he consented to give to Jacob the speckled and brown among the flocks, and Jacob began to prosper, prosperity brought with it new sorrows. He had, hitherto, known Laban as an exacting master; he was now to know him as a jealous foe.

The mere fact of Jacob being more prospered than himself (in whatsoever way the prosperity might come) was, no doubt, in itself sufficient to arouse the jealousy of Laban and of his sons. It behoved Jacob to remember this, and to beware of everything that might tend to invite or stimulate their hatred. It was the purpose of God to prosper Jacob. If therefore he had quietly waited on God, he would surely have received the intended blessing from the silent operation of His hand. There

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could have been no need for Jacob to scheme, and to devise, and to secure to himself advantage by what Laban must have deemed an act of deceit and fraud. But it was hard for Jacob to be still: hard for him to restrain the inventiveness of his subtlety. He placed striped rods before the stronger of the cattle as they conceived; and so the stronger of the flock became Jacob's, and the weaker Laban's. Can we wonder, after this, that the face of Laban was not toward Jacob as before?*

Yet, whatever the action of Jacob, Laban was the oppressor, and Jacob the oppressed. "This twenty years," said Jacob, "have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she-goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy

* It must not be inferred because God permitted or caused the scheme of Jacob to prosper, that therefore He approved it; any more than He approved the plan for deceiving Isaac, though thereby the desired blessing was secured. God, not unfrequently, gives effect to the schemes of His people that He may discipline and chasten them by resulting sorrows —sorrows that would have been avoided, if they had ceased from their own devisings and waited on Him.

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two daughters, and six years for thy cattle: and thou hast changed my wages ten times." (Gen. xxxi. 38.) Rachel also and Leah said: "Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? Are we not counted of him strangers? for he hath sold us, and hath quite devoured also our money. "(Gen. xxxi. 14.) Their words were not untrue. God marked the oppression, and said to Jacob: "I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee." (xxxi. 12.) "Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee." Thus again, in faithful love, God interposed—reminding him of mercies past, and of blessings yet to come, and opening up for him a way of present deliverance. Yet Jacob, though protected and comforted, can scarcely be said to have gone forth from the land of his exile in honour. It could not be said of him, that he went not out "in haste, nor by flight." (Is. lii. 12.) On the contrary, "he stole away." "Jacob stole away unawares to Laban the Syrian, in that he told him not that he fled. So he fled with all that he had." (Gen. xxxi. 20.) He was protected indeed. God checked the pursuit of Laban and restrained his wrath; yet there was little honourable in Jacob's flight. And in this household there was one, and that too the person whom he most dearly loved, on whom rested the guilt of theft and deceit, if not of idolatry. Rachel had stolen her father's gods. Did she fear them? Did she dread lest they should aid her father in his

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pursuit? Or did she trust in them, and intend to worship them as *her* gods? She could scarcely have taken them with the view of delivering her father from his sin; for, in that case, she would have ground his idols to powder—not hidden them in her tent: nor would a righteous action have sought to screen itself by falsehood. It was too evident that evil deceit and subtlety had not departed from Jacob's house. Jacob, indeed, was guiltless: he knew not of the theft. He knew not that idols were accompanying him on his way. Indeed, just as Laban was eagerly searching out his images, Jacob was preparing to sacrifice unto the Lord. Jacob had failed in many things; but he had not learned to love Laban's idols: his heart had not departed from the living God. Him whom he had worshipped of old, he worshipped still. There was none other in whom he trusted—none other in whom he hoped.

Protected then by God, and befriended, though not like Abraham honoured, Jacob returned to the land of his inheritance, there, indeed, to experience fresh sorrows, and encounter new dangers. Rebekah he found not. The Scripture, indeed, is silent respecting her death: but, no doubt, she would have been mentioned, as Isaac is, if she had lived to welcome the return of her son. Esau however remained, stronger far in power—and, it might be, fiercer in wrath, than when Jacob of old fled from his presence: and Esau must be

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met. Thus, notwithstanding the many years that had intervened, the past came back upon Jacob with all its terror—intensified terror, for Jacob now trembled for others as well as for himself. "I fear him," said he, "lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children."

Yet Jacob need not have thus trembled. On the contrary, he had peculiar reason to be strong, and of a good courage. Just before he uttered those words of anguish, God, as if to assure him of His present care, had sent holy angels to meet him. "And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim." Thus then, not only was a heavenly host appointed to watch over Jacob, but he was permitted also to behold them; that so he might be comforted and know the strength provided for him from above. He saw the angels of God, and recognised them as God's host.

It might have been expected, perhaps, that at such a moment all thought of his own little band—all confidence therein (if indeed he had ever confided in its weakness) would have vanished from the soul of Jacob, and that his eye and his heart would have rested solely on the host of God. But how could Jacob forget himself? Was his own band, that band which his own energies had gathered, to be as nothing? Was it to have no place? If the angels of God were one host, was not *his* band another? So, at

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least, Jacob seemed to reckon; and therefore, he called the name of that place Mahanaim; *i.e.*, *two* hosts.

But words used by God's people to give expression to their own partial or erring thoughts, are, not unfrequently, in the mercy and grace of God, adopted by Him, to declare His ways and be the exponents of His thoughts—ways which are not as our ways, thoughts which are not as our thoughts. So is it with this word "Mahanaim." It has been adopted by God. It remains to us as a word pregnant with blessed meaning; teaching us of glories in heaven and in earth yet to come, when Jacob's weakness shall give place to Israel's strength, and glory rest upon Immanuel's land. In that day, strengthened with strength from on high, Israel shall become the host of the Lord their God, appointed to serve Him in the earth; but in association with others, more glorious than themselves, even risen saints—who, as being heavenly and glorified, shall serve the Lord in heaven His dwelling place, as well as fulfil the missions entrusted to them in the earth. Thus, there will be two hosts (Mahanaim) even as there will be two Jerusalems (Jerusalaim)—heavenly and earthly: heaven bestowing, earth receiving; and so linked together in concurrent and harmonious action under God. This is that which shall be seen in the Shulamite in the day of her blessing. Shulamite means the spouse of Solomon; the name

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bestowed on Israel when married to the great King—the true Solomon. A time is drawing nigh when it shall be said, "Return, return, O Spouse of Solomon; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Spouse of Solomon? As it were Mahanaim"—*i.e.*, two hosts. Strength in the earth shall be associated with strength and glory in the heavens. This shall be seen in the Shulamite—this shall characterise her in the day of her espousals. Thus then, we learn the true meaning of Mahanaim; a word which, used according to the thoughts of Jacob, must be deemed a word of presumption and folly; for it exalted weakness whilst yet remaining weakness, into the place of strength: but, when used according to the thoughts of God, it becomes a word, true, blessed, and glorious; for it speaks of an hour, when *He* will change weakness into strength; and so give to it that power of co-operation with higher heavenly might, to which Jacob, in the day of his feebleness, seems to have aspired.

But to return to the narrative. The pledge of God's present favour and protection granted in the vision of the heavenly host, afforded to Jacob ground for firmest comfort and hope; for it proved that God was nigh to watch over him and to defend. Yet of this, Jacob seems to have availed himself not at all. After he had uttered the word "Mahanaim," it would almost seem that the thought of Divine protection had vanished from his soul;

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for the narrative, as it proceeds, is the record of the deepest anxiety and terror. It was a lesson to Jacob, and is a lesson to us—teaching us, that, in the hour of need, comfort and peace will assuredly vanish from the heart, if there be a determined reliance upon our own energies, or a determined leaning on anything of which *we* are supposed to constitute the spring or centre. God will not permit our weakness to be exalted into parity with His strength. He will have weakness viewed as weakness, and strength recognised as strength. Jacob's plan (for it does not appear that he consulted God) was to send messengers to Esau; and when they returned and brought no answer of peace, but only tidings that Esau with an army of four hundred men was coming, Jacob's heart utterly trembled. "Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed: and he divided the people that was with him, and the flocks, and herds, and the camels, into two bands; and said, If Esau come to the one company, and smite it, then the other company which is left shall escape."

Few passages in the life of Jacob seem more characteristic than this. He did not forget God. On the contrary, he cried to Him with an exceeding earnest and bitter cry: but before he called on God, he determined what he would do, and did it; even though the plan, on which he fixed, must have seemed to any eye but his own, hopeless: for who could expect that the second of his two feeble

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bands would escape, if Esau were permitted to sweep the first away? Endangered as Jacob was, could there be any true ground of hope in anything except the direct power of God? Was it not manifest, that if protection were by Him granted, it would be protection full and perfect; but that if not, all Jacob's plannings for the preservation of the second of his bands would be as chaff in the balance and vanity? Yet Jacob seems to have judged otherwise. He appears really to have had a certain hope in this division of his "host" or "band;" for the origin of the word is the same as "Mahanaim." He had now, indeed, constituted for himself "two hosts." When he used the word "Mahanaim," he had reckoned his host as one, and had set it in virtual parity with the host of God; but now, that host of God had vanished from the apprehension of Jacob's soul. It was forgotten. As regarded the apprehensions of Jacob's heart, that host had ceased to exist. His own little band, divided into two, now constituted his "Mahanaim." What were those two? Were they strength or weakness? Could there be a more perfect exhibition of weakness—utter and hopeless? And yet Jacob's hope lingered there; without, apparently, one thought recurring to his soul respecting the heavenly host which had been sent to meet him. Of Jacob's present "Mahanaim," that angelic host formed no part. What if Jacob's condition had been really in accordance

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with his own estimate thereof? Could there, in that case, have been any hope? How needful then, to distinguish between the reality of a believer's condition as determined and fixed by God, and that which he himself, in the perplexity or error of his own misguided thoughts, may *think* to be his condition.

In the prayer of Jacob, we find the expression of true humility and of thankfulness to God for His past mercies. There was a reference, also, to God's promise of continued protection; although of this he speaks tremulously—his faith being, evidently, feeble. After his prayer, however, there was more of hopefulness than before. He speaks no more of escaping with the second of his bands after the destruction of the first; but hints at the possibility of deliverance. "He said, I will appease him [Esau] with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure, he will accept of me." We have still, however, to note the characteristic habit of Jacob, in giving prominence to himself. He does not say, I will trust in God to still the wrath of Esau; or even, I trust in God to cause Esau to accept my offering. He said, "*I* will appease"; and made no mention of God. Having formed a new plan—in that plan and its execution his thoughts were for the present absorbed. It had become, as regarded the immediate apprehension of his heart, his present ground of confidence. Yet, he did not, and could

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not, feel certain of the result. "Peradventure" is the word by which he is obliged to qualify the expression of his hope. "Peradventure he will accept of me." A divided confidence, partly in God, and partly in ourselves, will never bring us beyond "peradventure."

Night came on, and Jacob made his arrangements for resting with his company. But how could a heart full of anxiety and terror rest? It is not every one that can say, "I laid me down and slept; I awaked, for the Lord sustained me; I will not be afraid for ten thousands of the people that set themselves against me round about." Jacob could not say this. He could not rest. He arose that night long before the morning dawned, and sent his wives and children and all that he had across the river, on the banks of which they had halted. After this, he appears to have returned, and was "left alone."

He was left alone, but not long; for in the form of an angel God met him. And what was the relation in which Jacob set himself to this heavenly visitant, whom, if he recognised not as God, he must have recognised as a messenger that came from God? Did he humble himself? Did he say, What saith my Lord unto His servant? Did he, in any way, take that place which weakness ought to take in the presence of strength? *That* was a place which Jacob had never yet taken; and he took it not now. He would not act as one devoid of

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strength. On the contrary, he looked upon himself as having strength—strength which he could use. And accordingly, he put it forth against the strength of the angel of God, and they "wrestled."

"Wrestling," it must be remembered, is a word of very definite meaning. It is not used to denote any, or every, development of strength that may be marked by earnestness or perseverance; but it denotes strength measured against strength. It indicates not the relation of an inferior to a superior (such, for example, as is held by a suppliant towards one whom he supplicates); it indicates, on the contrary, a relation of *conflict* in which rival contests with rival—each claiming to have the power of resisting, if not of overthrowing the other. "Wrestling" is the symbol of strength brought into antagonism with strength. Such was the relation which Jacob assumed towards the angel. It had long been his habit to act as if he were possessed of a certain co-equality of power with God. Self-reliance lay, as a canker-worm, at the root of his spiritual healthfulness. His own plans and capabilities occupied a place in his heart that was incompatible with a full and simple reliance on God.

It was needful that he should be taught to cast from him this evil and unholy confidence: and now, the time for the lesson to be given was come. To the very end of the night, Jacob continued to wrestle on. He refused to bend: he persisted in measuring his power against the power

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of God; and God permitted this long and stubborn display of misdirected strength. But suddenly, just as the morning brake, God touched the sinew in Jacob's thigh. It withered; and in a moment, his power of wrestling was gone. He could wrestle no more. The sinew of his strength was dried up. He halted upon his thigh. It was out of joint. All that he could then do was, to cling to Him who had thus proved Himself able to dry up the springs of his strength: to cling to Him as weakness clings to strength, and to seek His blessing—"I will not let thee go except thou bless me." They were the words, not of the wrestler, but of the enfeebled one casting himself on the grace, and power, and goodness of Another mightier than he; and then, and not till then, the blessing came. His name was changed from Jacob to Israel—"a prince with God." He had seen God's face, and received God's blessing, not in the place where he prevailed in wrestling, but in a place where the sinew of his strength shrank, and the power of wrestling was taken from him from for ever. Halting upon his thigh, he crossed the ford of Yabbok—a significant name, for it means "wrestling." He passed that river now, and left it behind him. His back was turned upon it for ever. The morning sun rose upon him in its brightness as he crossed it and left it, halting, but blessed.

It is a scene that reminds us of, and is indeed

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a pledge of, the coming of that hour when Israel, Jacob's people, after their long night of sorrow and stubborn obduracy, shall enter on the day of their blessing. Their stubbornness, indeed, is not as Jacob's, relieved by the counteracting influences of faith. In them, it is unqualified obduracy and rebellion. The evil of Jacob they inherit; but his faith they have not. Nevertheless, a day is coming, when even their hard heart shall be broken. More lowly and contrite even than Jacob, and no longer boasting in the sinew of their own strength, they too, halting on their thigh, shall enter on the day of their new history under the shining of that blessed morning—that morning without clouds—which shall rise upon them in a brightness never to wane. They, too, shall say, we have seen God's face and are preserved. They, too, shall cease for ever from their strugglings against God. They shall wrestle no more, and know why Israel in every age (doing what they understand not) have refused to eat of the sinew that shrank.

Blessed are they who learn the lesson *now*; who feed not on the sinew of their own strength, but lean wholly on God; acting when He bids them act, resting when He bids them rest, following—not directing, their heavenly guide; being in the power of God's blessing, "Israel:"—as to themselves, Jacob, the worm.

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The Rechabites.

JEREMIAH XXXV.

WHATEVER place of privilege or of blessing we read of in Scripture as the purchase of the blood of Jesus, we, as believers in Jesus, are entitled to say of it, It is ours; for we are taught to say, "all things are ours." (1 Cor. iii.) Unmerited grace alone could put such words as these in our lips, for amongst all the gifts and results of grace there is not one of which we can say that we deserve it. Do we *deserve* forgiveness of sins—the everlasting forgiveness of sins? And yet it is granted us—"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace." (Eph. i. 7.) Do we *deserve* to be united with Him in heavenly places in glory? Yet God has granted to us life in His risen Son, and "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." All this is God's own sovereign gift, because He has been pleased to accept us in the value of the service of His Son, who "brought up our sins to the Tree in His own holy body," there to meet the appointed judgment (see 1 Peter ii. 24), and who there also "gave Him-

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self for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour." (Eph. v. 2.) And observe, these are blessings given to the feeble as well as to the strong in the family of faith. As being in Christ Jesus their Representative and Head, all are seated in heavenly places—all made a heavenly people. And now that God has given these vast and unchanging blessings, eternal in the Heavens, is He unwilling to bestow other blessings needful for us here—needful for our holiness, happiness, and peace, as well as for our honour and for our praise in the day of Christ?

The people of the Lord here are ever marked as being a separate people. Carry your mind back to the beginning, and trace the history of God's people throughout the Scriptures. Think of Abel, and Enoch, and Noah—God's earliest witnesses. Think of Moses in Egypt; of David in Saul's household; of Elijah and Jeremiah in the midst of the corruptions of Israel; of the Son of God Himself, and of His Apostles, down to the hour when the Scripture closes with John a prisoner at Patmos. Did not separation, and, as a consequence, rejection, mark the place of them all? And when you think of the picture which the Apostles prophetically drew of the corruptions which were to mark the close of professing Christianity among the Gentiles—those corruptions in the midst of which we at present live, is it, or is it not, needful to be separate in the midst of a scene like this? Ought we to be

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within the gate of man's city, or *without* it? I am sure your consciences will say, *Without* it—"without the gate, bearing His reproach." But whence does the power of such separation come?—from God or from ourselves? Shall we look to God for it, or shall we trust our own resolutions and devisings? Surely it is not an easy thing. God only can give it—give it as one of His most precious gifts. See how this was recognised by the Lord Jesus in His closing prayer over His disciples as recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John. After praying for their heavenly union and their everlasting blessedness in the heavens, He prays for the maintenance of their separation in earth: "Sanctify them through Thy truth; as Thou hast sent me into the world even so have I sent them into the world." "I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil"—that they might be My witnesses, separate to My truth, My service, My testimonies in the midst of a world in which Satan rules. Such was the purport of the prayer of the Lord Jesus. It sufficiently teaches us the unspeakable value of separation; it teaches us whence alone the power of such separation can come; it teaches us how the practical separation of the people of Christ is ever kept as an object before the mind of the Father and the Son. And in reading the Scripture, how honourable the mention of all who in any age or any dispensation were privileged to hold this place

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of separation. The Rechabites, a portion of whose history I have just read to you, were one company of these separated ones. It is one of the few bright lines of light that illumine the dark page of human history.

It is interesting and instructive to trace the history of the family of the Rechabites in Scripture. They sprang from a people called the "Kenites." The Kenites are first mentioned when God enumerates to Abraham the nations who were to fill up the cup of their iniquity, and to be extirpated by Israel when the time should come for Israel to enter on their Land. The Kenites stand first in the list of nations thus marked out as the objects of the wrath and of the curse of God. "The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites." (Gen. xv. 19.)

Again in Numbers xxiv., when Balaam prophesied to advertise Balak what should befall his people "in the latter days," he looked on the Kenites, and "took up his parable, and said, Strong is thy dwelling-place, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock. Nevertheless the Kenites shall be wasted, until Asshur shall carry thee away captive. And he took up his parable, and said, Alas, who shall live when God doeth this!" Here therefore again they are mentioned as a proud and evil people to be given over to judgment at the last; yet out of this

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people it was that grace caused this righteous remnant—the Rechabites—to come.

The first of this family of whom we read was Jethro. Jethro was he who received the outcast Moses when, hated by Egypt and spurned by Israel, that servant of God sought refuge in the wilderness. Moses had loved God's people, simply because they were God's people—even when they were in their low estate—when there was nothing, save sorrow and misery and oppression, to commend them to his love. He loved them, and by his deeds *proved* his love to them, and thereby lost every thing. Not a heart in Israel, much less in Egypt, owned him; he fled into the wilderness a lonely outcast, but there this Kenite—Jethro—met him, welcomed him, received him into his dwelling, and cherished him; and it brought to his house a blessing. There is ever a blessing in owning, and receiving, and welcoming the outcast Truth, or its servants. If there be one thing that the Lord will surely remember, now, and in the day of His glory, it is that. In Jethro, then, the protector of the rejected Moses, we find the origin of the separated and honoured Rechabites.

Years rolled away—patience of faith was exercised—until at last Moses was suddenly called by God to the headship of Israel His people. And when the house of bondage had been left, and the hour of Egypt's judgment escaped, and the Red Sea passed, and they entered into the wilderness to

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find there the succours and guidance of God, and when they rested there in peace, then again we read of Jethro coming to behold their joy, and to rejoice with them. "And Jethro rejoiced for all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel, whom He had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. And Jethro said, "Blessed be the Lord, who hath delivered you out of the hand of Pharaoh, who hath delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all Gods: for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them. And Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt-offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God." (Exodus xviii. 9—12.)

There have been always occasional periods in the history of God's people when He has been pleased to interfere on their behalf, and to give them an increased measure of strength and blessing. There are occasions even now, when He is pleased to put forth His reviving hand and to open afresh the choked channels of the fountains of His truth, and to cause its streams to be diffused with wider scope of blessing. Such seasons ought to be duly recognised; it is meet and right to recognise them, and to give God thanks. It is true, indeed, that the light may again wane and the joy depart—we must always expect everything that is blessed to wane here, till the great hour of the accomplished glory

of Jesus comes—and then there will be waning no more. Then all who have the spirit of Jethro shall come and rejoice over the goodness with which God has visited His people, and say with unfaltering lip, "His goodness endureth for ever." Whenever we see therefore any increase of blessing, or any revived blessing amongst the people of God, let it remind our faith of that coming hour, when all fulness of blessing will be given, never more to depart—the great and everlasting jubilee of the Israel of God.

A little while after, we again read of Jethro and his household. It was whilst Israel were toiling on through the wilderness, and it was a question whether this Kenite family of faith should leave Moses and retire, or whether they should abide and share the destinies of Israel.* Moses said, Nay, go not away; we are in the midst of a wilderness—help us—be to us for eyes. That is, we are going onward through dangers, and difficulties, and sorrows, to the land of our rest—guided by whom?

* "And Moses said unto Hobab, the son of Raguel the Midianite, Moses' father-in-law, We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel. And he said unto him, I will not go: but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred. And he said, Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness and thou mayest be to us instead of eyes. And it shall be, if thou go with us; yea, it shall be, that what goodness the Lord shall do unto us, the same will we do unto thee."

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By the Lord God of Hosts. He it is whose ark goeth forth at our head to search out a resting place for us. But then, as He appoints a place for us, we need observantly to watch every token. We need "eyes": we need to see where the power of the enemy is: we need to observe what is the order that He appoints to our hosts day by day—we need "eyes" to discern the good—"eyes" to eschew the evil—wilt thou be as eyes to us and help us? See, here is a blessed opportunity for all who desire to be servants of God's Truth. Truth still tarries in the wilderness—it still dwells, as it were, in tents—it still migrates—it is not stationary. When its light wanes or is extinguished in one place, we have to follow it where it may be kindled in the midst of new circumstances in another. Till the great hour for the everlasting establishment of Truth is come, it is the place of the family of faith—of all who are "without the gate"—to dwell like the Rechabites in tents; "for here we have no continuing city." Therefore we still need "eyes"—we need wariness and watchfulness—we need quick discernment to see where the path of Truth and of honour is. Sometimes the being told to watch calls up in us a thought of sorrow—the sense of the painfulness connected with watching predominates. On the other hand it may be a thought of joy and blessing, for it may be watching for opportunities to display the banners of the Lord—to assail the citadels of the foe—to advance the standards of

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Israel—or to lead into places of quiet rest where there are pastures, and "palm trees, and wells of water." Of one thing we may be very sure, that it is by adherence to the *suffering truth* and the suffering servants of God that we find opportunity for using any power that may have been given us of holy intelligence and discrimination—any power that may be as "eyes" to discern that which may be for the encouragement, or comfort, or guidance, of the people of God.

The words of Moses were heard; the place of honour accepted, and Hobab did abide with Israel; and thus his family became abidingly connected with Israel's triumphs, and with Israel's woes.

Years again rolled on, and we find Israel quitting the wilderness and entering their land. But the land was full of enemies. Under Joshua they received part of it indeed; but there were struggles still; and here again we read of this little faithful remnant. We read of them as quitting their city, called "the city of palm trees," and coming into the wilderness of Judah. Just one verse tells us this. "And the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up out of the city of palm trees, with the children of Judah, into the wilderness of Judah, which lieth in the south of Arad: and they went and dwelt among the people." (Judges i. 16.) How characteristic this! They might have dwelt if they had pleased in their city, for it was in the Land, within the confines of Israel's inheritance. It

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was no unholy place of sojourn. It was a place, too, of beauty and repose. Palm trees stand contrasted with the wilderness—the waste and arid wilderness—as an emblem of pleasantness and rest. Yet this family of faith having weighed the value of this city of rest, and compared it with the value of adherence to the people of God, wavered not in their resolve. They preferred to be with God's people; and so went into the wilderness of Judah. It was this step that led to that place of honour which the Rechabites subsequently held.

It would have been happy indeed, if Israel had so advanced in straightforward paths of holy obedience to their God, as to draw others on with them to peace and blessing. But it was far otherwise. Israel grievously trespassed, and the deserved chastisement came. Their enemies, who once trembled at their presence, were allowed to be exalted over them. They were despoiled of the land of their inheritance. Its fields and its vineyards, its wells and its pleasant ways, they dared not approach. They stood stripped of all that once characterised them as Israel. They trembled where they had been wont to triumph; and they wept in the midst of the land of their blessing. Such was the condition of Israel when Deborah arose. You remember the era of Deborah—what distress there was in Israel. They were trampled down by their enemies: they were despoiled of the goodness of their land. They had neither vineyards, nor wells

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of water, nor any thing that could comfort or cheer them. The power of the enemy had swept their peace, their dignity, and their comfort, all away. (See Judges v.)

And here let us not forget "that the things that happened unto them, happened unto them for ensamples"—ensamples unto us. Is the present a day when the people of God are enjoying their privileges, and feasting, unitedly and peacefully, on "the fat things"—which have been provided as their portion?—or are they like a scattered flock feeding on "fouled pastures" and drinking oft of troubled, or, it may be, of poisoned waters? Think not merely of Christendom, but of the true people of God in the midst of Christendom, and say whether the proud and cruel foe is not tyrannising over them in the power of deception and falsehood. How has he succeeded in hindering, if not in preventing, access to many a refreshing well-spring of truth—to many a pleasant garden where plants of heavenly fragrance might be cultivated—to many a quiet resting place where the flock might rest at noon. How many a stronghold of falsehood has he reared? How many a victim has he entangled in his snares? But, through Deborah, a new era of blessing dawned on Israel, first, by the quiet ministration of the truths of God—when, seated under the palm tree, she ministered truth and judgment to all who came to her from the tribes of Israel. No doubt the eye of the stranger scorned her, and

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her ministration. They knew not the blessing that ever attaches to the ministration of God's Truth. Power, however, as well as blessing was really there; and when the proper time came, Deborah was able to call forth Israel into the place of energetic service against the foe. Israel had long heard the words of Truth from her lips: they were prepared therefore for the summons: they obeyed it, and they triumphed. But in that day of victory, to whom was the honour given of striking the blow that sealed the conquest of Israel by destroying the great captain of their oppressors? That honour was given not to one of the tribes of Israel, but to one of the stranger-Kenites who were dwelling in the midst of Israel. It was Jael the wife of Heber *the Kenite* who smote the great oppressor. "Blessed above women shall Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite be; blessed shall she be above women in the tent. . . . . At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay down: at her feet he bowed, he fell: where he bowed, there he fell down dead. . . . So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord: but let them that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might." From the 11th verse of the 4th of Judges * it would appear that this family of Heber,

* "Now Heber, the Kenite, which was of the children of Hobab, the father-in-law of Moses, had severed himself from the Kenites, and pitched his tent unto the plain of Zaanaim, which is by Kedesh." Zaanaim means "*removings*," from a

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the Kenite, to which Jael belonged, had separated itself even from the rest of the separated Kenites. There was no doubt some wise reason for this double separation of Heber's household. Probably, the rest of the Kenites had begun to settle down, seeking rest before the proper time of rest had come. The children of Jethro therefore were found in a peculiarly separate place, and from this doubly separated family came strength to give the blow—strength to be manifestly with the Lord against His enemies.

I scarcely need say that we are not now permitted, much less required, to give any *outward* blow. We are to use no sword save the sword of the Spirit; our feet are ever to be "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." Yet there is such a thing as moral warfare. The children of faith are called to be spiritual soldiers—warriors rallying around the banner of Truth, and setting their faces as flints against certain things and persons whose ways must bring on them judgment at the last, even "judgment without mercy." There are persons who, under Satan, the god of this world, form the manners of the age, and give to it its character. The world, secularly and ecclesiastically, has its leaders. Is the testimony that is to be borne against the world and its evil to be less firm,

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Hebrew word signifying "*to move tents*," "*to go forward*," as a tribe that has no settled dwelling place.

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less decided, than the feeling which nerved the hand of Jael, when God required it, to give the outward blow of destruction to the oppressor of His people? She did what she did, for, and unto, God. She was appointed to pre-figure the unsparing vengeance of that hour when the way of the wicked will be recompensed upon their own head. Have any deceived others? God can appoint deception to them. Have any mocked at others? God can mock at them. Have any put forth the power of destruction against others? God can put forth the power of destruction against them. What Sisera had done to others was requited to himself again, and Jael was but the instrument employed of God to inflict the well merited recompense. The deceiver was deceived—the smiter, smitten. There is an hour coming when a judgment more terrible far than that which fell on Sisera will rest on all those who have helped on, either by their activities or by their indifference, the sufferings of the Truth and people of God. It is the part of the family of faith to anticipate that coming hour, and to take a place of virtual separation now, even as they will be actually separated when the judgment really comes. Nor is the place of separation a place of inactivity. We have there to put forth our energies that we might exterminate, not men, but principles. We may love the individual; indeed, we are commanded to love him, and to bear to him the testimony of grace: but ways of evil and

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principles of falsehood, we are to spare *not*. There is a holy energy, a holy severity, that is acceptable to God. The Apostle Paul well knew that the character of the hour at which he ministered required that he should be no less separate than Jeremiah—no less careful to separate the precious from the vile. "I would," said he, "that they were even cut off which trouble you." Yet though stern against incorrigible transgressors he did not on that account forget that he had also to minister the gospel of the grace of God.

But to return. There was yet another period when, under Ahab, the corruption of Israel became so great that the worship of Baal had supplanted—(indeed, as far as the eye of man could see) *thoroughly* supplanted—the worship of Jehovah. You well remember the sorrowful path of Elijah and Elisha in the midst of these corruptions. And when at last the hand of Jehu was called forth by the God of Israel to give the destructive blow to Ahab's house, as Jehu was proceeding on his mission of judgment, one of this separated Kenite family—Jehonadab, the son of Rechab, met him. (2 Kings x. 15.) And Jehu said, "Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is." And he bid him come up into the chariot. Thus Jehonadab was associated with the appointed Avenger, and with his work. We have before seen the separated Kenite acting with God and with God's servants against the external

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foes of God's people; and now when the evil was within Israel itself, and the judgment was directed against Israel's royal house, we still find the Kenite true to God, and associating himself with the person whom God had called forth and appointed to execute His will. May we, in this also, remember the place of the Kenite. The hour of Jehu does but typify another yet future hour when the true Avenger, appointed of God to execute vengeance on all the corruptions of Israel and of the earth, shall come forth in the chariots of His might, "travelling in the greatness of His strength." There is no other relation which "the Lion of the Tribe of Judah" can finally bear towards all unrepented of and unpardoned corruption. He has already, even during this day of longsuffering grace, forewarned us of this His final relation towards all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. Are then our hearts with His? Shall He say, "Is thy heart right as my heart is with thy heart?" and shall we answer, Yea? There should be no hesitancy in the reply of God's separate people as to this; and when they are rightly and wisely separate, there will be none. Jehonadab was thus separate. We may look upon him as embodying all the principles of holy Kenite separation from the days of Jethro downward. Attracted to the people of God because they were His people, rejoicing with them in the day of their gladness, and not forsaking them in the day of their adversity, associated with

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God when His hand was raised against His people's enemies, and equally associated with Him when His hand was raised against His people's own corruptions,—such was the Kenite—such was Jehonadab. May it not be otherwise with you. The hour of separate, Jeremiah-like, testimony is not over yet. Never was there an hour that required more that the face should be set as a flint—that the precious should be separated from the vile—that the voice of holy testimony should be heard "against peoples and nations, and tongues, and kings." Think of the place assigned to John in Patmos. He was commanded to eat the sweet but yet bitter book of prophecy—bitter in result—bitter when the knowledge it communicated had been so digested and incorporated as to give a character to every feeling, and thought, and testimony. John was commanded to eat this bitter book, and then was commissioned again to prophesy "against (επι) peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." Yet who was more gentle than John? Who more full of the testimony of grace? Who more ready to receive any who should turn from their evil ways? The Holy Spirit is the power of the combination of Truth. It enables us to remember Jesus as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," whilst we also know Him as "the Lamb"—diverse thoughts, yet how necessary to be combined. The hour when the lion-strength of the Redeemer of Israel is to be manifested in the appointed work of vengeance

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is indeed not yet come. Yet faith remembers what is written respecting it, and therefore waits—waits *in separation.* Nor is lion-like strength unneeded and unknown by God's servants even whilst carrying on their present testimony of grace. Did not John need such strength to enable him to stand firm in his testimony against the nations? Did not Stephen need it when he said, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears"? Yet the spirit of Jesus as the Lamb was also there; for he added, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

But to return to the history of the Kenites. Years again rolled away, and we hear nothing more of this faithful family until the days of Jeremiah. The corruptions of Israel and of Jerusalem had steadily increased, and the long night of Israel's sorrow was drawing nigh when we again find the Kenite family mentioned under the name, "House of the Rechabites," for they were descended from Jonadab the son of Rechab. The true pilgrim character of that honoured servant of the Lord, his sense of the prevailing evil, and the strength of his conviction that it was no time for seeking to rest, or to rejoice in anything that the earth could afford, was marked by his solemn charge to his posterity. "Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father," said the Rechabites, "commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye nor your sons for ever: neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell

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in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers." Strangership and separation from all joy that is merely of earth (for such is the joy that "wine" here signifies) was thus the place which the last remnant of the Kenite family typically held. And they had kept the commandment which had been given them. "Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, our daughters; nor to build houses for us to dwell in; neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed; but we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us. But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem." Thus, neither the dread of Nebuchadrezzar, nor the afflictions of Israel, had made them swerve from their two-fold purpose; first, to cleave to the land of Israel (for *in that* they were to be strangers); secondly, to maintain their own peculiar place of separateness therein. Jeremiah set wine before them in vain. They would not drink. God knew that they would not drink. He did it only to prove them—only to manifest their faith and their obedience, and to set them in honoured contrast with His own backsliding people. The Rechabites well understood that whatever

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might be the path of others, *their* path was plainly marked by the commandment of Jonadab their father, a commandment which they knew to have the sanction of God. Not even then the invitation of Jeremiah (though perhaps it seemed to them strange and inexplicable) caused them to waver. They found the rule of their conduct, not in that which they understood *not*, but in that which they understood. Their understanding recognized that the commandment which they had obeyed had been surely given; their conscience attested its excellency, and when the understanding and conscience concur, little doubt remains as to the path. What though the wondrous providence of God had placed Moses in Pharaoh's household and made him great and prosperous there? Did that influence him? No! As soon as his understanding and conscience clearly recognised that it was better—that it was the path of faith—"to suffer affliction with the people of God" rather than to abide where he was, he renounced all that Providence had given him in Pharaoh's house, and cast in his lot with God's suffering people. The heart wavers not where the eye is single, otherwise hindrance may be found in everything; and the heart knows well how to employ its sophistry in defending its unfaithfulness. But it was not so with the Rechabites. They resisted even Jeremiah, and boldly said, "We will drink no wine." They had long had certain fixed ascertained principles of conduct; and to them they

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adhered. May they be an example to us. The separate path of the Rechabites was by them regarded as their honour and their joy. They looked on it as their heritage. Are there no similar commandments which may be regarded as our heritage? Are we not commanded to beware of the wine of this world's joy? There is a wine which the corrupt nature of man delights in. We read of a "vine of the earth," whose clusters are to be cast into the "great wine-press of the wrath of God." (Rev. xiv.) We read of a vine which is "of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah—whose grapes are grapes of gall—whose wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps." (Deut. xxxii. 32.) We read of a cup which the harlot of Babylon mingles. But there is also another wine—new wine —joys which are of the kingdom of God—joys which pertain to the new creation, having their source, not in the first Adam who has fallen, but in "the second man, the last Adam," who liveth for evermore. Are we able to draw the distinction between these two cups? And which do we love? Which do we drink, the old wine or the new? Naturally we drink of the old. We love it, and are satisfied with it. "No man having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better." May we, through grace, ever say, The old is *not* better. We will not seek it. We will seek to drink of the new. We will seek our joys in things that are of the new

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creation of God. May we shun that old wine of which they who habitually drink, have no desire, no relish, for the new.

Again, is it not another part of our heritage to dwell as it were in tents, outside the city of man, saying, "Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come"? The place of the Rechabites as dwelling in tents, was virtually the place which Israel once occupied when in Egypt they stood to eat the passover in haste, their shoes on their feet, their staves in their hands. Nor is the time yet come for the sandals to be put off, or the staves to be laid aside. There is still to be, as it were, a dwelling in tents; and so it will continue to be until the hour shall at last come, when it shall be said, "The sovereignty of the world hath become the sovereignty of our God and of his Christ." Then there will be rest, settlement, establishment, for the servants of the Truth. Both in outward things and in spiritual things, prosperity and peace shall attend their goings. The time for the rest of Truth will have come, when, to use the typical language of Scripture, the ark of the Lord will rest, and be *manifested* as resting, between the Cherubim, its staves drawn in, in token that it journeys no longer. But it is otherwise now. Now it is the day of man—now the city of man flourishes, and the children of the kingdom are called without the gate bearing the reproach of Jesus. Such is the character of our calling. May we prize it. May we cleave to

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its principles; then in our measure we shall be as the Rechabites: and even if the threatening power of the world waxes greater, and even if they who profess the name of Christ become weaker, like Israel before the king of Babylon, yet praise and blessing, like that which rested on the separate Rechabites, will, in a measure, be our portion. The principles and habits of the children of faith should in such a day as this be markedly contrasted with the tenor of everything around. What practical power would there be in Truth unless it separated thus? Are we ready to own this? Do our hearts mourn that this practical power of truth is developed so feebly? We may well mourn; yet let us not be unduly discouraged. There is one ever ready to say, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it. A plant may be of slow growth, but if it buds at all, if it advance at all, there is something over which the husbandman watcheth. But if the minds of the saints turn not to these things but to other interests —if they are careless respecting the fruitfulness of the garden of God—how can they expect prosperity? May we then be enabled to receive these things, not as rebuke but as encouragement. Let us regard them as opening up to us a path of privilege and honour. Do the tokens around us indicate that such separation as this is needed? Do the signs of this present hour, both in the Church and in the world, teach us this lesson? The precious truths that we have learned from the word of God

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would fail in their result, if they did not lead us to desire holy Nazarite separation. I trust that God is graciously using them to this end. He expects, however, that we should consider and understand what His hand is doing; and He looks for the desires of our heart and for our energies to be with Him in it; remembering, if we feel feeble, the graciousness of Him with whom we have to do, and the fulness of grace that is towards us in Christ Jesus. "We are not under law, but under grace." If our hearts understand not the desirableness of such paths, then must they be dull indeed. True there are many discouragements—many things to deaden the heart, yet still if we remember that whilst there are many things that deaden, there are others which revive, and stimulate, and encourage; and if, in wisdom, we eschew things that ensnare, and seek to cultivate habits and practices and intercourse that strengthen, we shall not be without our blessing. Oh, then, that we may be wise as to these things.

And was it not joy to those faithful sons of Jonadab to hear these words of blessing pronounced over them: "Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever"? Did not those words of blessing make their hearts thrill with thankfulness? Put yourselves forward then to the last great end—the end of manifested glory, when all faithfulness, yea, even the least service done to others in the name of Christ, will be

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remembered, honoured, praised, even by the lips of the Lord Jesus Himself. Is there any joy on earth, any honour to be compared with the joy of those who shall hear those last final words of blessing, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy lord"? That joy is open to you. And even as there will be joy then, so the Spirit of promise, the Comforter (who always testifies according to Truth) will secretly now cheer those hearts that are, through God's grace, walking in a path that will bring blessing in that day. If, then, you seek after honour then and comfort now, seek to cultivate those things in your hearts and ways that will make you more and more like this separated family. Seek to cherish them in others as well as in yourselves; and then, whatever may be appointed to you here, whether it be sunshine or storm, whether you be blighted by sorrow or measurably protected from its power, you will find a peace which is above and beyond the circumstances of earth, keeping practically your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

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On Leviticus X.

THE SIN OF NADAB AND ABIHU.

IN the previous chapters of this book God had determined, in much detail, the order and method of the service appointed for His own holy Tabernacle. Of all the characteristics of that Tabernacle, none was more distinctive than the presence there of the perpetual fire on the Burnt offering altar. "The fire upon the altar shall be burning in it; it shall not be put out: and the priest shall burn wood on it every morning, and lay the burnt offering in order upon it; and he shall burn thereon the fat of the peace offerings. The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out." (Lev. vi. 12.) This perpetual fire thus burning on the altar was the symbol appointed by God as the expression of His holiness in its relation to His people. Fire, taken simply by itself, is the symbol of the searching consuming power of holiness. Fire burns up dross: it consumes stubble: it searches into all things: it elicits fragrance where fragrance is, and consumes corruption where corruption is found. Here, however, the symbol is not fire merely, but fire burning on the Burnt offering altar—the expression not of holiness only, but of

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holiness appeased, placated, satisfied. For it had fed on sacrifice—sacrifice appointed of God. Thereon the fire of the altar had fed gratefully, and was *satisfied.* It was, therefore, fire that Israel could approach in peace. It welcomed their offerings and their gifts. The coal taken from that altar could touch the unclean lips of the sinner, and it could be said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." (Is. vi. 7.) Whilst holiness, as holiness, must burn destructively against every thing that is unclean or sinful, propitiated holiness—holiness *satisfied* by sacrifice, becomes the power of deliverance and blessing. Such was the lesson taught at the Burnt offering altar. It was the place of holiness, but the place of peace also, because of propitiation by means of sacrifice.

Accordingly, it was the appointment of the Lord that Aaron and the priestly family should use no fire in His Tabernacle, save that which burned on the Burnt offering altar. But this commandment was no sooner given than it was disobeyed. No sooner had Israel been placed under the sweet-smelling savour of the offered and accepted sacrifice, and *so* received God's blessing, than some among them turned the very privilege thus accorded them of approaching God in peace, into an occasion of transgression and deadly sin. "Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon,

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and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He commanded them not." They substituted for the fire of the altar other fire—fire that had *not* fed on sacrifice—unpropitiated fire, as if they, sinners, could, apart from sacrifice and bloodshedding, meet and have communion with the purity and holiness of God. This was, in truth, the meaning of their deed. They altered the symbol by which God had declared the ground of His relation in peace to His people. They virtually said that they would worship an unpropitiated God. The result was that "fire went out from the Lord, and devoured them, and they died before the Lord."

Unless we knew the blinding power of sin, and the subtilty of the great deceiver, we should scarcely conceive it possible for the heart of man to sink into such a condition of fatuity as to imagine that it has ability and right to judge the ways of God. Who but God is competent to determine the claims of His own holiness? "His ways are not as our ways, nor His thoughts as our thoughts." Surely if there be any thing in which it behoves man to bow implicitly and unreservedly to God, it is when God reveals any thing respecting Himself and the way by which man—sinful man, can appear as an accepted worshipper in His presence. Are sinners to determine in what manner it is meet for God to exercise His love, and in what manner it is fitting for them to receive it? Yet that school of neologian infidelity that is now spreading around

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us pretend to be able to do this. Amidst all their disagreements (and their disagreements, notwithstanding "the verifying faculty" of which they boast, are infinite) they all, with the exception of such as deny the personal existence of a Supreme Being, admit that men are not quite independent of God and of His love. They allow that we do in many things need the exercise of God's love towards us; but they agree in saying that for God to display His love in saving us through the vicarious penal sufferings and obedience of a Substitute, is a thing unworthy of God, and injurious to the dignity of man. *That* method of love, consequently, they reject: and in rejecting it, they reject the only kind of love that can reach man unto salvation.

Such was the character of the sin of Nadab and Abihu. They well knew that God was not wont, arbitrarily and groundlessly, to appoint what He appointed. Their consciences must have told them that each of His ordinances involved in them some sacred principle of Truth, of which *He* understood the value, even though *they* might fail to discern it. Audaciously to impugn His wisdom and contravene His commandment was, therefore, rebellion; and rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft—great, that is, as the sin of turning to unclean spirits for aid, and avowedly abandoning the living God. Yet Truth taught partially through types and shadows, brings not with it the same responsibility as attaches

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to the knowledge of those who live in the noon-tide light of revelation. God had not at that time spoken to us by His Son. The Holy Ghost had not at that time been sent down from heaven to unfold the reasons for the suffering and death of the Holy One. But now the one expiatory sacrifice, typified and predicted of old, has been offered. It has been preached also. The method of God's mercy has been explained; and multitudes have professed it to be their hope. Yet with the lip only, for they continue not in their confession. They abide not in that which they have professedly acknowledged as truth. As soon as some modern Nadab or Abihu crosses their path, substituting for the relations of God in redemption other relations in which the vicarious punishment of a Sin-bearer, wounded for the transgressions and bruised for the iniquities of His people, is ignored, they listen. They discern not, or (if they discern) they reject not, the falsehood. They give ear to the smooth syren sounds, and are taken in the snare. These are "the withdrawers," the non-abiders in Christ (see Heb. x., and 1 John ii.) against whom the Apostles warn us. "They went out from us because they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us, but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." As the day of Antichrist draws nigh, we shall behold myriads upon myriads treading this path. Mul-

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titudes, even in this favoured land, under the influence of that neologian or pantheistic infidelity of which Maurice, Jowett, Stanley, Kingsley, and their friends are the present upholders, have not only entered this path, but are pursuing and following it out to its very extremes. It is a path surely leading to perdition: for if the one true sacrifice as preached by the Apostles of Jesus be rejected, there remains no more sacrifice for sins. God has no other sacrifice in reserve. "There remaineth only a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation that shall devour the adversaries."

Yet Satan is able to assume the garb of an angel of light. Where light from God has shone brightly, he is unable to deceive by darkness only. He finds it needful, therefore, to invest his servants with garments that bear some resemblance to the garments of the sanctuary, and to cause them to use incomplete, partial truth. Truth severed from the connexions with which God has associated it in His Word, answers the purpose of the Deceiver well. Accordingly, many of the modern teachers of Infidelity speak much of the goodness and beneficence of the character of God. They speak of His "fatherhood" towards men as His "offspring;" and of the love which, as the Father of His creatures, He exercises towards them all. Many of them are earnest, energetic, and zealous, not merely in spreading what they assume to be Truth, but

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also in deeds of philanthropy and mercy. They seek to relieve human woe, and to hush the groan of creation. They inveigh (and often justly) against many of the arrangements which human selfishness and pride have enforced not only in the world, but in the Church. They would reform and rectify society by new principles which (they say) the long-despised voice, not indeed of revelation, but of man's inner consciousness teaches. As Absalom in the day of David's weakness and age, pointed to the evils which David's rule had failed to overcome, and boasted of the new prosperity which his principles would give to Israel, so these teachers, refusing to distinguish between Truth and Truth's corruptions, and ascribing to Truth itself the consequences of the sin of its professed servants, delight in pointing the finger of scorn at the past history of Christianity, and ask whether Creeds and Bible Christianity have brought to men true prosperity and peace. Therefore, say they, let Creeds perish. Let the Bible be deposed from the supremacy into which the folly of some have sought to exalt it. Instead thereof, let the inner voice of humanity speak, and then there shall be prosperity. The mind of man, according to them, has an innate heavenly power of judging all things, and therefore can extract from the Bible, as from all other things, all that is worthy of being extracted, and can reject the dross. Being thus competent to guide itself, it is independent of external legisla-

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tion. It needs not written, much less stereotyped law. Such is their doctrine. Of what avail then is their devotedness—devotedness to a deadly system like this? What avails it that they speak smooth things respecting the "fatherhood" of God and the like? It is true that there is a sense in which God is their Father. But does He not say, "If I be a father, where is mine honour?" And can we honour God if we reject His Word—that Word of which He saith that He hath magnified it above all His name?

We deny not that man by creation has a right to speak of God as a Father. Thus Adam is called "the son of God:" and the Apostle when speaking of the vile and idolatrous, yet intellectual Athenians, speaks of them as "the offspring of God." We admit this natural relation of man to God: nor do we desire to depreciate it as if nothing worth. Great graciousness, and long-suffering, and kindness, and love, are manifested by God towards men as men. He is "kind to the unthankful and evil." He does them good in that He sends them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons filling their hearts with food and gladness. He maintains before their consciences by the witness of the works that He hath made, a perpetual testimony to "His eternal power and Godhead." He grants to them providential mercies also, and sends among them the light of His Truth. All these things are mercies—mercies unspeakable, for which men ought

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to magnify and praise His name. But do they praise Him, or own Him, or worship Him? No. Conscience testifies—facts testify—Scripture testifies, that all these mercies are either despised, or else misused and perverted. Man by the very use of the mercies that are vouchsafed to him as a creature, aggravates his guilt, and proves that he is altogether dead in trespasses and sin. He proves that what he really needs is not light but *life*. He needs both ability and will to walk in light, and he needs also pardon. And this pardon and this life are in the Gospel provided: but provided in *Another;* and that other a sin-bearer, and therefore, a wrath-bearer—One who satisfieth the claims of God's governmental holiness by vicarious suffering and vicarious obedience in life and in death. But this is the very truth which the boasted verifying faculty repudiates; and in repudiating it, rejects the testimony of the Holy Ghost, and rejects salvation. Professedly magnifying God's fatherhood by creation, it scorns His fatherhood in redemption. Yet under the first fatherhood we perish because of our sin. His fatherhood in redemption alone brings salvation. They who attempt to worship God apart from the appeasement provided in the blood of the one great Sacrifice, repeat the sin of Nadab and Abihu; and must, except they repent, perish everlastingly. It is indeed a sin that brings with it in its train many others: but it is in itself a deliberate rejection of the one

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way of God's salvation. All who say that they can meet God's unpropitiated holiness, must reject as useless the propitiation provided in Christ. They scorn the word that saith of Him *as the sacrifice*, "Look unto Him, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth."

Aaron's anguish was great when he beheld the hand of God thus stretched out destructively against his house. Yet, terrible as was the blow, it stayed the progress of the evil. It prevented fresh transgression on the part of those who had sinned; and preserved others from being drawn into the same abyss. But it is otherwise now. Judgment, whilst threatened merely, men despise: and thus evil becomes not only extended in scope but intensified in character. Can any one deny this, who with the Bible in his hand views what is now passing in the midst of Protestant Christendom? In viewing the scene around us, we have far greater reason to weep than either Aaron or Jeremiah. In the place where there has been most light, most privilege, most blessing, and where God still waits to be gracious, "lawlessness"—libertinism of soul is advancing most.

There is still indeed, even as there ever has been in every past dispensation, a remnant according to the election of grace; and among them there are *some*, though they may perhaps be but a few, who are beginning to read aright the lesson of this present hour. There are some who weep. For

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such the instruction and comfort of this chapter is especially intended. It is true indeed that the place held by Aaron and his sons, as typically bearing the iniquity of the congregation before the Lord, finds no counterpart in any office or service committed to any among the servants of Christ. In this Aaron and his household were types only of One—even of Him who once, bore and for ever put away the sins of all His believing people. All their sins having been put away by His one finished offering (Heb. x.) there remains no need, no possibility of offering for sin again: for how could any thing be offered with a view of putting away that which is already gone? But there were other services connected with the Tabernacle beside those which had for their object the making atonement for sin; and in many of those services the people of Christ find the foreshadowing of relations which they at present hold towards God. For they too are priests: they too belong to the sanctuary of God, and find an altar there at which they feed. It is theirs also to offer the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, and to watch over and guard God's holy truths, and to learn with their lips to keep wisdom, and to put a difference between "holy and unholy, clean and unclean." The people of God (unless indeed their inward eye becomes enfeebled or darkened) well know the value and the honour of such services, and the blessedness of abiding steadfastly in them. And they are commanded to abide

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in them. No sorrow, no sense of discouragement,—not even the presence of apostasy in the very circle within which they stand, is to daunt them, or to cause them to forget that the consecration of their God is upon their heads. Aaron and his sons that were left, were not to uncover their heads—that would have indicated that they renounced the service of their God, for the covered head was a token of professed subjection to Him whom they served: nor were they to rend their garments, for that would have been a virtual abandonment of the priestly office in which they had been called to serve. Therefore, however great may be the increase of evil and of sorrow (and they will increase greatly as the latter day comes on) the people of God have to take heed that none of these things move them or tempt them to retire from that Tabernacle and service to which God has called them, and to which, through His grace they belong, and shall belong for ever. They who shall surely be found in the Courts of His glory above, should be by nothing driven from the Courts of His service here.

They who reject the one way of approach unto God's covenant mercies through the one sacrifice once and for ever offered, are accustomed to speak much of looking through nature up to nature's God, and of worshipping in nature's temple the great beneficent Father of His creatures. Ignorant of the manner in which the Fall has affected crea-

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tion physically, and themselves morally, they think to open up for themselves in the world's wide sphere, springs unnumbered of satisfying joy,—of training for themselves many a pleasant plant, many a fruitful vineyard, whose grapes shall fill their cups with the wine of gladness. The present is peculiarly a moment when men are looking forward to the earth's future with bright anticipation; expectant of the hour when the vineyards they are planting so busily shall yield their fruit. And fruit they *will* yield. But as is the vine, so also shall be the fruit. "Their vine is of the vine of Sodom and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter: their wine is the poison of dragons and the cruel venom of asps." Such grapes, such wine, the children of faith, the priests of God's sanctuary, must never touch.

I do not indeed say that the believer finds in earth no "wine" of which he may taste. On the contrary, we read of those who are dear to us in the flesh as well as in the Spirit. We know that God has supplied to us, and that richly, things for enjoyment—εις απολαυσιν. We do not say, "Touch not, taste not, handle not," but we welcome the gifts of God's goodness, and take them as Jonathan took the honey in the wood (1 Sam. xiv. 24) and give God thanks, saying, "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." Yet, however numerous the springs of holy joy thus supplied

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within the sphere of nature, it is not to that sphere that the child of faith turns when he seeks strength for the service of the sanctuary. He knows that that which strengthens for earth is far different from that which strengthens for heaven, and that the purest cup of earthly joy brings with it danger, for it may be immoderately, or else unseasonably, drunk. At the best it has no tendency to quicken those sensibilities to things "unseen," which it is one of the chief objects of the instruction of the sanctuary to develop; because on their right development holy discrimination between good and evil depends. They consequently "who know the plague of their own heart," and how it is the tendency of our flesh to misuse or to pervert the best natural gifts of God's goodness, find little difficulty in apprehending the reason of the commandment given unto Aaron, "Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the Tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations. And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; and that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses."

Amongst all the relations that we hold in earth there are none—none of our joys, or interests, or occupations, or services, of which we can say that

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from *them*, or the remembrance of them, we can derive strength for entrance into the sanctuary to meet the light, and holiness, and purity that are there. It belongs only to God, and to Him acting in the power of redemption, to provide that which is able to strengthen for His own holy presence. In calling His people near to serve Him in His sanctuary, He strengthens them not with the wine of earth, but with food from His own altar; and that food was SACRIFICE. "Take," said Moses, "the meat-offering that remaineth of the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and eat it without leaven beside the altar: for it is most holy: . . . . And the wave-breast and heave-shoulder shall ye eat in a clean place," etc.

The meat-offering was the type of the pure unleavened character of Christ presented for us on the altar of the Cross—"an offering made by fire of a sweet savour unto the Lord." There is nothing that the believer more acutely feels in seeking to serve in the sanctuary, than the imperfectness inseparably connected with all those developments of thought and feeling that constitute what we call "character." However much the believer may long after perfectness, he well knows that there is nothing that he can bring (to use the typical language of this chapter) to the altar of God where that pure and holy and searching fire burneth, and say, "in these thoughts and in these services—indeed in all that I think and do, there is nothing, O God, in

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which the holy fire of Thine altar will find any thing contrary to its own holiness." He cannot say, "Behold, O Lord, the shoulder of my strength: its strength is perfect, and it hath been, is being, and ever shall be, used only for Thee. It hath shrunk from no burden; it hath laboured and wearied not; all that it behoved it to bear, it hath borne, and that with a perfectness that hath in nothing fallen short of Thine own." He cannot lay bare his heart before the Lord and say, "Behold it, O Lord. Inspect my heart in all its tendencies, and Thou wilt find only that which is pure and holy as Thyself." Where amongst the sons of men is "the breast" that can thus be "waived" before the Lord, or where that shoulder of strength which can thus be presented and the inspection of His holiness challenged? Yet such a "shoulder" and such a "breast" must be found somewhere; or else the servants of God would be provided with no food whereby they could be strengthened to serve Him in the Sanctuary. Accordingly, God, in the abounding of His mercy and grace, hath provided it—provided it in Immanuel. In the strength of His vicarious service, in the presentation of His inward perfectness, in the offering of His perfect character, we find the antitypes to the heave-shoulder, and wave-breast, and unleavened meat-offering on which God commanded the priests of His Sanctuary to feed. All this perfectness has been presented for us, once

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and for ever; on our one altar, the Cross. God provided it in order to meet the claims of His own holiness, and also to supply unto us food; that we might not pine as those who have no perfectness of strength, no perfectness of inward being, no perfectness of character, but that we might be able to say, that we have all provided for us in Another, even in Him who hath served and offered *in our stead.* This is food indeed: better than any wine that can in any wise be extracted out of the circumstances of this fallen earth.

But there were injunctions also respecting the place and manner in which the meat-offering was to be fed on. It was to be eaten "without leaven" in close proximity to the altar. Being, as I have already said, a type of the pure unleavened character of Christ, no leaven was to be mingled with it when offered on the altar of God: nor, after it had been offered, was it to be fed upon *with* leaven.

No one who really knows the Truth of God could for a moment tolerate the thought that there was a shadow of imperfectness either in *the nature* or in *the character* of Christ. He was at once "without blemish" (*αμωμος*) and "without spot" (*ασπιλος*).* In Him heavenliness was seen, manifested and sustained in all patient perfectness

* See the difference between these words considered in "Notes on the Greek of the First Chapter of Romans," page 110, as advertised at end of this volume.

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in the midst of the sorrows and corruptions of earth. Nor are God's people altogether unconscious of the blessedness of the great truth, that the Holy One has presented unto God for them the value of His own character in all its tried and developed excellency. They know what it is to strengthen themselves by feeding on this food; and that too, "near the altar"—that is to say, at the place where the claim of God's holiness and the manner in which that claim has been satisfied by the pure unleavened offering is brought to remembrance. It is a place so holy that even the very best of our services must appear as "leaven" there—how much more all that springs from our worldliness or evil. The command therefore not to conjoin with the meat-offering, when we feed on it, "leaven," is, in effect, a commandment to conjoin with it nothing. Its excellency is an isolated excellency. We are to feed on it alone—eschewing evil, eschewing ourselves, and every thing that emanates from ourselves.

We must not however forget that food, even when provided and set before us, is not necessarily fed on. Of this we have a memorable example in Aaron himself. He, together with his sons, as having to bear *typically* the sins of those whom they represented, were especially commanded to feed on the Sin-offering whenever its blood had not been brought into the holy place. By feeding thereon he was to be made strong to bear (typi-

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cally of course, not really) the iniquities of the congregation, and it was, moreover, a eucharistic act—an act of thankful and happy recognition of the mercy received by himself and by all whom as Priest he represented, in that the sin for which the offering had been presented was, by means of such offering, expiated and forgiven. If he fed not on it in the appointed manner, his priestly work was not accomplished. He would, as Priest, fail in attaining the appointed end. And he *did* fail. The sorrow that had fallen on him and on his house was, he said, so heavy, that he had no strength to perform the appointed service. A heart that sorrow hath crushed cannot be as if it were uncrushed. This was Aaron's condition, and Moses saw it was so and acquiesced; for Moses had no power to remove the cause of the shortcoming by turning Aaron's weakness into strength.

Aaron had "infirmity" (Heb. vii. 28); and it was meet that he should exhibit it. It was meet that he should stand in emphatic contrast with that Holy One in all whose services and relations before God and before man, we find, not failure or weakness, but steadfastness and strength. Needing no sacrifice for Himself, but coming to be a Priest for others, He found Himself at the moment when He was about to perform His great priestly act of offering Himself up as the one sacrifice for sin, surrounded by circumstances which would have dismayed and shaken the constancy of any heart

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excepting His. Christ was not devoid of feeling. His very holiness gave acuteness to all His sensibilities: and His appreciations of every thing were perfect because His soul was in perfect communion with God. His grief was not unreal when, at the close of His ministry He had to say, "Israel is not gathered" (Is. xlix. 5), and when He wept over Jerusalem; or when, beholding apostasy manifested in the midst of the few whom He had gathered around Himself, He said, "he that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me;" or when He heard Peter denying Him with cursing and oaths; or when He beheld all His disciples forsake Him and flee. The ruin seemed irrevocable and complete; and this too was the moment when He was about to meet that baptism of suffering wherewith He was to be baptised—where our apprehensions fail to follow Him. Here were sorrows indeed: sorrows that would have overwhelmed hopelessly and for ever, any one excepting Him who was appointed to bear them and to overcome. But He was the Rock; and as a Rock He stood. Psalms were in His lips even on the Cross. No depth of suffering took from Him His ability to praise and to give thanks. Out of the depths His cry ascended; and it was a cry of confidence and love towards Him whom He was glorifying in the fires. Aaron quailed under calamity, and his Priesthood failed; but Jesus overcame, and His priesthood abideth for ever. "The law

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maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore." According to the power of that perfect offering once and for ever made, He ever liveth to make intercession for His people, "nor shall He fail nor be discouraged until He hath set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for His law."

Of all the servants of Christ, there probably have been none who so well understood what it was to strengthen himself for his service by feeding on the Sin-offering as St. Paul. He had, indeed, no typical place to sustain like that of Aaron in foreshadowing Christ. Christ had come: Christ had completed the great work of redemption: and it was St. Paul's joy to search into and apprehend that which Christ had wrought for His people. He knew that the one, once-offered, finished sacrifice had placed its protective power over all God's believing people for ever and ever; that their inheritance was love, and not judgment; and that almighty grace reigned over them for evermore. It was his consciousness of this that enabled him amidst all discouragements, whether present or foreseen, to serve with a hope that never languished, and a vigour that never was impaired. At Corinth and in Galatia, he knew much anguish and many tears; yet in neither place did he quail before the storm. He strengthened himself in the remembrance that the saints of God are loved with an everlasting

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love, and blessed with blessings that no circumstances can alienate; and therefore if they wandered, he laboured for their restoration; and though they might cease to love him, he continued to love and to serve them still. "Though the more abundantly I love you the less I be loved." And afterwards at the close of his course, when the Church, because of the creeping in of wicked men and seducers, was beginning to cease from being the witness of Truth, and was entering on that disastrous course of evil which has since made Christendom what it is, how did St. Paul, though bitterly mourning over the present evil, and prophetically cognisant of that which was to come, uphold the fainting hands of Timothy; beseeching him still to labour and to serve. What though perilous times were to come—what though other saints of God were to turn away from him, as those in Asia had; did not the "firm foundation" that God had laid remain that which it ever was? Did not the Lord know them who were His? Had the love in which the people of God were called, changed? Might not Timothy still strengthen himself in the grace that was in Christ Jesus, and remember that God had not given him "the spirit of timidity (δειλιας), but of love, and of power, and of soundness of mind"? And though the Church might have become as "a large house" in which vessels unto dishonour were mingled up with vessels that were unto honour, yet this only afforded the ser-

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vant of God fresh opportunity for holy discrimination that he might purge himself of the one, and gather around himself the other. The abounding of falsehood only made it the more needful for him to hold fast "the form of sound words," and to keep by the Holy Ghost that dwelt in him the precious deposit of Truth committed to his charge. This St. Paul did, and this he exhorted Timothy to do. "The bow" of the Apostle "abode in strength." The holy energy of his spirit did not give way under all the pressure that was allowed to bear down upon him during the concluding years of his ministry. The grace that had strengthened him at the beginning, continued to strengthen him at the close, and gave him habitually to know and to appreciate the preciousness of that Sin-offering which was still the same, whether it sheltered the children of the kingdom in the hour of their united strength, or during the prolonged season of their disunion, scattering, and weakness. He looked for and received the continued supply of the spirit of Christ (Philippians i. 19), and was able during the darkest period of his course to say, "I am strong as to all things through Christ that strengtheneth me."

As to ourselves, we are now, in all probability entering on the last phase but one of the lengthened reign of evil. The old age of iniquity is being reached. Men more advanced in disobedience than Nadab and Abihu are triumphing in the prosperity

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of their schemes; and professing Protestantism is being divided between the mummeries and idolatries of ecclesiastical corruption, or else is giving itself over to the licentiousness of infidel speculation. Yet few even of Christ's people recognise these things, or care to give heed to the warnings of Scripture touching the latter days. They either ignore altogether the rising evil, and speak hopefully and boastfully of progress in good; or else say that the clouds, though they may seem to threaten, will soon disperse and vanish before the increasing power of the light of Truth. Others again, whilst owning the approach of a coming struggle with the powers of darkness, tell us with all confidence (though Scripture positively teaches the reverse) that the saints of God are to be taken from the earth before the hour of Truth's last conflict comes, and would have us believe that it is a blessing to be deprived of the honour of fighting in that last great battle-field where soldiership for Christ is most needed, and triumph is most glorious. They seem to count it no honour to be numbered among the faithful few who will at that time "overcome because of the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony, and will not love their lives unto the death." (Rev. xii. 11.)

To see such obstinate determination not to bow to Holy Scripture at a moment when there ought to be the closest adhesion to its testimonies, is bitterly discouraging: for all hope of union in the

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Truth (the only union which really meets the requirements of God) is hereby frustrated. Yet on this very account it is the more needful that we should strengthen ourselves by feeding on the Sin-offering and hold fast our confession. This chapter of sorrow does not nullify the blessing with which the preceding chapter concludes. There we see all Israel congregated and placed under the protection of accepted sacrifice. Moses and Aaron, the King and Priest, conjointly, spread forth their hands and blessed them. Fire from heaven came down and consumed the sacrifice. It was Heaven's attestation to its excellency. "The people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces." It was indeed a transitory scene; but it was typical. It was a type appointed of God, and therefore a pledge from Him of that yet future hour when Israel, humble but rejoicing, shall stand in manifested and everlasting acceptance under the excellency of the one true Sacrifice, and receive the blessing of the true Priest and King, the great Melchisedek—whom to foreshadow it was needful that Moses and Aaron should unite their offices. Then too around Melchisedek in His glory, shall stand, raised and glorified likewise, a priestly family—even all who from Abel downward have suffered the reproach of Christ and of His Truth. They shall be strengthened according to His glory then, and "follow Him whithersoever He goeth," and enter with Him the heavenly Sanctuary to reign and to serve under

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Him and with Him, "made Kings and Priests unto God."

But whilst for *these* blessings we wait until the day of glory dawns, we have also blessings in possession; for all the *spiritual* blessings of Israel in the day of their acceptance we forestall. Already has our great Melchisedek placed us under the everlasting protection of the one finished and accepted sacrifice. Already has He spread forth His hands towards us and blessed us. It was His last act on earth as He ascended into the heavens. Already to us has come, and that for ever, "the acceptable time, and the day of salvation." Heaven is opened over our heads in peace and in complacency, never to be closed again. Such are the present mercies in which we are called to rejoice with "joy unspeakable," yet chastened, because of our knowledge of ourselves and of the circumstances around us; that so our confidence might be combined with reverence and godly fear; that we might "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." That which strengthens unto this end is holy strength that cometh from God.

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THE

OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS

NOT TO BE EXCLUDED

FROM THE CHURCH IN GLORY:

WITH SOME REMARKS ON THE HERESY OF MARCION.

BY

BENJAMIN WILLS NEWTON.

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The following remarks on the dangerous error of excluding the Old Testament Saints from the Church of God in Glory, are taken from an Introduction prefixed to a small volume recently published, entitled NARRATIVES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT.

This doctrine of their exclusion having formed part of a system taught by a person named Marcion in the early centuries, an account of his heresy and of his habits of explaining a large part of the NEW *Testament as* JEWISH, *and not Christian Scripture, is appended. It would be difficult to speak too strongly on the danger of this heresy.*

The remarks on SONSHIP *are taken from an Exposition of Ephesians i., to be found in Vol. I. of "Occasional Papers upon Scriptural Subjects." Those on* MARCIONISM *are from "Thoughts on Parts of the Prophecy of Isaiah."*

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EXTRACT FROM THE INTRODUCTION

TO

"NARRATIVES FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT."

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

I SCARCELY need say that I utterly reject the doctrine of those who exclude the Old Testament Saints from the Church in its final glory. I regard that doctrine as a dangerous heresy, and necessarily subversive of the Gospel of the grace of God as taught in God's holy Word. It is "a different [ἕτερον] Gospel, which is not another."

For, what is it that gives title to entrance into the Church, and all the Church's blessings? Is it not, simply and only, the value of *the Blood of the Lamb?* Is not the Church of God defined as being that Body "which He hath purchased with His own blood"? (See Acts xx. 28.) The blood was shed, and the blood was offered—offered in all its preciousness to God. It was an offering that was meritorious—infinitely meritorious, for it was the result of the voluntary obedience of One "whose

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goings-forth have been from old, from everlasting." The imputation, therefore, of that meritoriousness was the greatest of gifts that could be granted by God to any creature, and this it is that has been apportioned by God to every member of the family of faith, so that they might have thereby community of blessing. Accordingly, we read, "*All* things are yours, for ye are Christ's." And, again, "whom He justified, them He also glorified;" and so glorified that they are to be "conformed in glory to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren." Abraham was justified by faith: all the merits of the Holy One rested on his head; he was Christ's, and therefore had "ALL things:" he not only belonged to the family of faith, but he was the head of that family; and yet I am asked to believe that from the chiefest of the blessings and glories of that family he is excluded. I am asked to believe that Abraham, though redeemed, is excluded from the great result of redemption as revealed in Scripture. And what is the ground of this supposed exclusion? Abraham and the Old Testament Saints, say they, are to be excluded because they did not receive, whilst on earth, the Holy Spirit *in the same manner* as we have received it who have lived since Pentecost. Such is the doctrine of the appended passage.*

* After mentioning Abraham, Moses, David, and others, the passage goes on to state: "But all these are presented to us in God's Word as individual servants of His—not as members of a

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Thus it is taught that our title to belong to the Church of God in glory does not depend on that which we are in Christ, but on that which we are in the Spirit. Our title to say, that we "are fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God," rests, according to this system, not on Christ the Saviour, but on the Spirit as given at Pentecost. Experiences wrought in us through the Spirit, not

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body. They were men of faith. Their devotion and obedience shine brightly on the pages of the inspired record. But there is not such a thought suggested by all that is said of them as that they were members of the body, the Church. They were quickened by the Spirit beyond all doubt. By virtue of the foreseen sacrifice of Christ they were forgiven and saved. They will all have part in the first resurrection, and partake of heavenly glory. There can be no question as to any of these things. But no one of these things, no, nor all of them together, constitute the Church. The Church shares these things, life, justification, resurrection, and heavenly glory, with the saints of Old Testament times; but what constitutes the Church is something distinct from, and beyond all these things. *It is the actual living unity with Christ and with each other of those who, since Christ's resurrection, are formed into this unity by the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. Was there anything like this in Old Testament times?*"—"Plain Papers," p. 83.

In another passage of the same publication we find the words: "Those risen and glorified saints who do not form part of the Church." This is just the Popish theory which gives the title of "*saint*" only to those who have lived since Christ came. It is canonical to speak of St. Paul or St. Jerome, but not so to speak of Abraham or Isaiah.

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faith in Jesus, become the link that unites us to the hope of appointed glory. If this be so, we need to alter those blessed words which say, "The Church of God which He hath *purchased by His own blood:*" we should be obliged to say, the Church of God, which He hath made His Church because of that which it learns and knows, through the Spirit. We could no longer say that *Christ* was "the Rock" on which the Church was built. We must seek some other foundation. The foundation must be found in something wrought IN us by the grace of the Spirit, and not in the external work of the Lord Jesus FOR us. Is not this virtual Popery? It is, as I have already said, a different Gospel, which is not another.

It is, no doubt, true that Abraham and the Old Testament saints had not the same fulness of light, nor the same dispensational privileges as were possessed by Peter, and Paul, and John. Neither the Old Testament saints, nor even John the Baptist, who came between the Old Testament and the New, were *dispensationally* in the kingdom of Heaven as an economy on the earth. As regards dispensational position and the character of his service, the least in the kingdom of Heaven was greater than John. It was the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus that introduced the kingdom of Heaven as an economy into the earth. He it was who first declared the great salvation. (See Heb. ii. 3.) Every disciple, therefore, of Jesus, as belonging

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to that kingdom, and able to bear testimony to its grace, was *dispensationally* greater and more privileged than John. But they whose service on earth terminated before the kingdom of heaven was dispensationally introduced on earth, are not therefore excluded from it as by and by manifested in glory. *Heaven is not to become a transcript of the dispensational differences of earth;* and therefore we read that Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, who, like John the Baptist, were not in the kingdom of heaven as an economy on the earth, will be in it when manifested in glory. "I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. viii. 11.)

I have already referred to some of the blessings ascribed to Abraham in the Scriptures. I will state them more fully. In the fourth of Romans we are taught that Abraham was justified by faith, and that righteousness was imputed to him without works.

In the fifth of Romans the privileges of the justified are recorded, one of which is "expectation of the glory of God." Another is "the reigning in life through one, Jesus Christ," and that, as the result of being "constituted righteous" by His obedience. These things are said to be true of the justified, of whom Abraham is one.

In the eighth of Romans we find these words: "We know that all things work together for good

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to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Now, seeing that Abraham was thus called and justified, shall he not stand among the many brethren who shall be conformed to the image of Christ in glory?

In 1 Cor. xv. 20 we read: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the FIRST-FRUITS of them that have fallen asleep" (*των κεκοιμημενων*)—it is the perfect tense, and therefore emphatically includes Abraham, and all the Old Testament saints. If, therefore, Christ in resurrection be *their* "first-fruits" and *our* "first-fruits," is not this a pledge that we shall all rise in the likeness of the same glory? Again, in this chapter it is said of all believers, in every Dispensation, that as they have all died in Adam, so they shall all be quickened IN Christ. The word "IN" and the reference to the first Adam, show that all believers are regarded as being one with the last Adam, as their new federal head. It is a text that proves that there is no redemption that does not result in living union with the person of the Redeemer. Abraham has borne the image of the earthly Adam, he shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

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In the Old Testament, also, we find a remarkable passage referring to the resurrection of the dead saints of Israel at the time of Israel's conversion and restoration to the favour of God. "Thy [Israel is addressed]—thy dead shall live, my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of light (אוֹרוֹת), and the earth shall cast out mighty ones." (Is. xxvi. 19.)* Abraham and the Old Testament

* This is an interesting passage, and is of itself sufficient to show that the Old Testament saints are part of the mystical body of Christ; for how else could they be described as "His dead body"? All the dead saints of Israel, together with all others of the family of faith that have fallen asleep in Jesus (*οἱ κεκοιμημενοι*), shall rise in "the first resurrection." As soon as the Trumpet that announces the descent of the Lord into the air shall sound, the dead saints shall rise. It will be a moment of utter darkness—rayless darkness; for all the natural sources of light will have been withdrawn. Yet in a moment, suddenly, the earth shall be radiant with the brightness of unearthly glory, for the bodies of myriads of saints shall start from their graves glorified in the likeness of the glory of their Lord. This shall be one of the tokens that the day of Israel's restoration has come. (*See* Romans xi. 15.) Therefore we read "Thy dew [the dew of the morning of thy blessing] shall be as the dew of lights"—*pluralis excellentiæ*—fulness and perfectness of light, as when the rising sun shines forth upon the morning dew.

"And the earth shall cast forth mighty ones," or giants. This I regard as the right translation, not "shades," *manes*, as Horsley and margin of Revised Version; that would contradict the New Testament. "Dead" would be a

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saints are here described as belonging to Christ's mystical body now dead; but then, as His dead body, they shall arise in glory. It is in another form a declaration of the same truth as is declared in the passage just quoted from 1 Cor. xv., where we are taught that all who have fallen asleep in Christ shall rise in the likeness of His glory.

In the Galatians, where we who live in this Pentecostal Dispensation are taught respecting our own final blessings, how are they described? Are they described as something apart from and higher than those granted to Abraham? No. "They that are of faith are blessed WITH faithful Abraham." "WITH" is not a word that implies *severance.* It implies *communion.* Indeed, to use the words of Dr. Horatius Bonar, the argument may be even more strongly stated. "'They that are of faith, the "'same are the children of Abraham.' 'IN THEE "'shall all nations of the earth be blessed' (iii. 8): "'blessed with faithful Abraham' (iii. 9): 'to "'Abraham and his seed were the promises made' "(iii. 16): 'that THE BLESSING of Abraham

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better rendering than that. I regard רְפָאִים as being the plural of רָפָא—*Rephaim*, an ancient nation of the Canaanites, famous on account of their gigantic stature. See Gesenius, who also observes that the word *Rephaim*, "in a wider sense, appears to have comprehended all the giant nations of Canaan." When the time comes for this verse to be fulfilled, all the giants of earth shall give place for ever to the raised and glorified giants of God.

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"'might come on the Gentiles through Jesus "'Christ' (iii. 14); 'if ye be Christ's, then are ye "'Abraham's SEED, and heirs according to the "'promise' (iii. 29). From these statements it is "plain that the question discussed by the Apostle "was—'Are believers in Christ really to *get up to* "'Abraham's privileges and standing?' He takes "for granted that the heirship was his; the king-"dom his; the sonship his; the glory his—made "over to him by the original promise; and his "object is to show us that *we* are to enter on "*Abraham's* privileges. 'The blessing of Abra-"'ham' he assumes to comprehend everything "that God has promised to us in Christ, and he "shows us that we are actually to get all that! "He speaks of Abraham as so lofty and so "glorious, that the highest place to be desired "by us is simply to be *one of his seed.* This is "the Church's privilege in consequence of her "connection with Christ: 'If ye be Christ's, "'then are ye Abraham's SEED!'"* In the Galatians, too, the Old Testament saints, though placed for a season in the condition of pupillage under the Law, were, nevertheless, "sons" of God. And what is the necessary consequence of being "sons"? "If sons, then heirs: heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." In the same Epistle we are taught that *all* the members of the family of faith, whether Jew or whether Gentile, are the children of Jerusalem

* Dr. H. Bonar's Prophetic Journal.

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that is above. "Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all."

In the Colossians we are taught the antitypical meaning of circumcision. Circumcision, as the Lord Jesus Himself teaches us, was not "of Moses, but of the fathers." It was the sign of the covenant of *promise* made with Abraham. It signified that all the heirs of promise must be antitypically circumcised: that is, separated from all that characterised them in the flesh as children of the first Adam, and brought into that condition of glorious and unearthly being which is known in "the last Adam." This was effected for the whole family of faith by union being granted them with Christ in His death and resurrection. Thus they "are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands," "by the circumcision of Christ;" that is, by circumcision effected for them by God through and in Christ. Circumcision, therefore, granted as God's pledge to Abraham, involves in its antitypical accomplishment association with Christ in His death and resurrection, and all the results of such association in union with Him as the Head of His body the Church, even as those results are detailed in the Epistle to the Colossians.

In the Hebrews we are taught that the "many sons" whom God is bringing into glory are regarded as the brethren of Christ, sanctified in Him, and made "one" with Him (Heb. ii. 11): and these blessings are expressly extended to the Old Tes-

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tament saints in the 16th verse. "For verily He taketh not hold of angels; but of the seed of Abraham [*i.e.*, the whole family of faith] He taketh hold." In Hebrews vii. it is said of Abraham, not merely that he was the possessor of promise or promises, but that he had "THE PROMISES," that is, ALL the promises. Can any expression be more unlimited than that? We are further taught in the eleventh chapter, that "he looked for a city that hath foundations"—a heavenly city; and that heavenly city is elsewhere termed "the Bride, the Lamb's Wife."

Other texts might be added, but those referred to more than suffice. And now will any one affirm that Abraham can have this standing in the grace of God; that he can be justified by faith; have the imputed righteousness of Christ; be a son of God, and a joint-heir with Christ;—shall we say that all this, and much more, is true of Abraham, and yet that he is not on that Rock on which the Church is built? Surely no one will affirm that he could be like Peter on the Rock, and yet not be of the Church? The being on the Rock, and the belonging to the Church in glory, are convertible terms. Shall we say that, although it is true that Abraham is Christ's, and although the Scripture teaches that he who is Christ's hath "ALL THINGS" (1 Cor. iii. 22), yet that Abraham hath not "all things"? Are we to say that the father of the family of faith is excluded from the highest

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blessings of that family? Are we to say it is untrue that there is one Father "of whom the whole family," whether resting in the heavens, or yet militant in the earth, is alike named? Are we to say that Abraham hath "THE promises," and yet that the chiefest results of those promises he hath *not?* Are we to say that Abraham belongs to that heavenly city whose maker and builder is God, and that that city is termed "the Bride," and yet that he hath not the blessings which pertain to that city? Shall we say that Abraham, or any one else, can be washed in the blood of the Lamb, and yet not come under the full force of such a text as that found in the Ephesians—"Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it . . . . that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church," etc.? Was not Abraham under the effectual operation of everything here mentioned as making the Church what it is?

Some, apparently, have been deluded by the thought that in excluding Abraham and the Old Testament saints from the blessings that pertain to "the Bride," it is not intended to exclude them from "the Church," but only from a part of the Church's privileges—from a certain aspect, as it were, of the Church's glory. But this is not the doctrine of the system to which I refer. The passage quoted in the note on p. 5, is plain and unambiguous. It speaks of "risen and glorified saints *who do not form part of the Church.*"

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Nor would it be possible to maintain that that holy and heavenly city, "new Jerusalem," which is so expressly termed "the Bride, the Lamb's Wife," represents merely a variation of official position or reward, such as might exist among individuals who had the same collective and corporate privileges. The heavenly city is a symbol of corporate condition. It represents the glory of the Church as a whole. Not to belong to it is spoken of as equivalent to perdition. "If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the Holy City, and from the things which are written in this book." On the other hand, all whose garments are washed—all who are redeemed —are regarded as having a title to entrance into that city. "Blessed are they that wash their garments,* that they may have a right to the Tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the City." And as regards Abraham and the Old Testament saints, they are *by name* recognised in the eleventh of Hebrews as inheritors of the glory of this heavenly [*ἐπουρανιου*] country. "But now they desire a better country, that is a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city." Of Abraham it is specifically said, "he looked for a city that hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God."

* Such is the true reading in this passage: *μακαριοι οἱ πλυνοντες τας στολας αυτων.*

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Can they who thus inherit the city of God be excluded from the privileges implied by its name, "the Bride, the Lamb's Wife"?

I have already observed that that name does not imply mere official difference, such as might exist between two equally loved children of a king, one of whom might be placed over two cities, another over ten. It denotes the common united portion of the redeemed, in which they together share the fulness of the love of Christ their Saviour. Is it possible that any of the redeemed should be deprived of the perfectness of Christ's love? Is it not true of them all, that He loves them as Himself? If any were excluded from this fulness of love, and from that near access to the Lord which it implies, would they not esteem themselves to be deprived of the chiefest of all the blessings which redemption has bestowed? Abraham, and all the redeemed, will rise with perfect powers of being, for they will rise in the likeness of their risen Lord. They will see Him as He is: they will know even as they are known. No personal dissimilarity can exist among those who are all equally like unto Christ. Their powers of understanding, their affections and their sensibilities, will be alike perfect. What then, if some of those thus qualified for full communion with their Lord, should be debarred from the same near access to His love that is granted to others? What if, having the same powers of holy love, they should not be allowed to

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manifest their love to Him as others will? Is anything like this conceivable in heaven? Is it conceivable that Abraham and Moses, and David and Daniel, should be shut out into comparative distance—which they would be if excluded from that City which is called "The Bride, the Lamb's Wife"? Can such a notion exist for one moment in the presence of the light of words such as these, "The glory which Thou hast given me, I have given them, that they may be ONE as we are one." These words apply to all those to whom the second verse in John xvii. applies—"As thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to *as many as Thou hast given Him.*"

There will, indeed, be difference of *reward* among the members of the one redeemed family, as is taught in the words, "Be thou over ten cities: be thou over five cities." But such differences interfere not with their common corporate blessings as the one family of God; nor are they dependent on dispensational differences, nor upon the fact that one has lived in a dispensation of great light, and another in a dispensation of less light. Differences of reward depend on differences in *faithfulness.* "Every one shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." If Abraham, in his Dispensation of lesser light, be more faithful than another who has lived in a Dispensation of greater light he will receive a higher reward.

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The saints of old were, for the most part, dispensationally under the Law. Although sons, yet whilst under a schoolmaster they differed nothing from servants, and therefore received the Spirit as the Spirit of servantship (*πνευμα δουλειας*, see Rom. viii. 15), and not as we who, living after redemption has been perfected, receive Him as the Spirit of sonship or son-condition—*υἱοθεσιας*. Yet is it not written, that "a wise servant shall bear rule over a son that causes shame"?

Can any one doubt that there have been few in Christendom whose works can compare with those recorded in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, as wrought by Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, and the holy men of old, who, with less light, had greater faith and faithfulness than we? It is a humbling thought that Abraham, with his less extended scope of knowledge, should, in faith and faithfulness, have so vastly exceeded us who live in a Dispensation in which such fulness of light has been given. The Apostles seem to have been "set forth last" to walk practically in the path of those "appointed to death." Since the Apostles died Christ's people have sought to reign rather than to suffer. It is humbling to think of this; yet it is still more humbling (might I not say terrifying?) to think that we, so inferior to Abraham practically in all our thoughts and ways, should yet venture to affirm, that because of his having, whilst on earth, lived in a Dispensation less favoured as to light than

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ours, he will have no place *with* us in the final glory of the Church of God, but be placed for ever in an inferior sphere. It is altogether otherwise. The prayer of the seventeenth of John has been prayed over the head of every believer that ever hath been, or ever shall be, from Adam and Eve, down to the last millennial saint who shall hear and receive the Gospel of the grace of God. There is one Father, one Lord, one Spirit, one faith. A oneness inconceivable to us will attach to every member of the family of faith when together brought as the mystical body of Christ into their final glory.

The text most relied on to prove that the Old Testament saints are to be excluded from our peculiar blessings is one which is intended to teach the very reverse. In the last verse of the eleventh of Hebrews the Apostle states, that although the Old Testament saints had suffered so long and so faithfully, yet that God out of His love and care for us, the younger members of the same family, would not allow them, our elder brethren, to enter upon their promised glory "apart from (χωρις) us." He has appointed that they should wait for us. Their spirits are with Jesus in the Paradise of God, but their bodies are yet in the graves. God has appointed that they should not be perfected in resurrection apart from us. They await us.

This is the obvious meaning of the words as they at present are translated in our version. But if the central clause be placed, as it should be, in a

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parenthesis, and if the ellipsis be supplied, then all appearance of ambiguity is removed.

Nor must it be forgotten that the same system that excludes all the Old Testament saints from the Church of God in glory, excludes also every saint that shall be born into the family of faith during the coming day of Truth's millennial triumph. A time is coming when the vail that has so long rested on Israel as a nation shall be removed. Their long closed eyes shall be opened; they shall "look on Him whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn;" the "Spirit of grace and of supplications" shall be poured upon them (Zech. xii.); "a nation" that shall truly be God's nation "shall be born in a day," and shall be made the centre of God's legislation and government in the earth. "To thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem." (Micah iv. 8.) Converted Israel shall become "a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." "God shall bless *them*, and so all the ends of the earth shall fear Him." (Psalm lxvii.)

Israel, as soon as they enter, as a nation, the family of faith, will be graffed back into their own Olive Tree from which, for eighteen hundred years and more, they have nationally been broken off. The symbolic Olive Tree of Romans xi., the sap of whose root is *promise and grace*, was first formally planted in the earth when Abraham, in the power of promise founded on sovereign grace, was first

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called into a place of distinctive separation in the earth, God saying unto him, "Blessing I WILL bless thee, and in multiplying I WILL multiply thee." Abraham believed and obeyed; but *all* Abraham's children had not the faith of Abraham, and faith is the necessary, and indeed the distinctive characteristic of the *true* Abrahamic family. "All are not Israel which [outwardly] are of Israel." (Rom. ix. 6.) Israel, *as a nation*, had not the distinctive family-feature. They were not "of faith;" and, consequently, rejected Him whose Advent Abraham foresaw. "Abraham," said the Lord Jesus, "rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it, and was glad." (John viii. 56.) But Israel, as a nation, belonging outwardly only to the Abrahamic family, persisted in rejecting Israel's King, and therefore have been broken out of the Olive Tree to which, ostensibly and by profession, they belonged. The excision of Israel was, in God's mercy, made the occasion of graffing a Gentile branch into the Abrahamic Olive Tree. Multitudes among the Gentiles accepted with joy the proposal to enter, through faith in Jesus, the Abrahamic family: for "they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." (Galatians iii. 7.) But an Adversary was nigh. The Devil came, and sowed tares among the wheat. Hosts of aliens have come in. All who professedly belong to Christ's Kingdom, are not really Christ's. As soon as the Apostles died, false profession predominated in Christendom,

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and Christendom became, even as it now is, corrupt. A cankered branch—a branch that has not continued in God's goodness, is now its symbol. Twigs and minor branches, few and comparatively hidden, may, as in Israel of old, receive sap from the root and bring forth some fruit, but the Gentile branch, as a whole, is cankered, and therefore, like the Israelitish that preceded it, is to be broken off. Excision is its doom. Nevertheless, all the saved, all who are "of faith," whether they belong to the Israelitish Dispensation of old, or to Gentile Christendom now, or to the Millennial Dispensation yet to come—all the saved of every Dispensation, all who belong to the Church of the living God, must have been borne by the root, and received of the sap of the root of this Olive Tree. To be excluded from the Abrahamic Olive Tree since that Olive Tree was planted in the earth, is to be excluded from the Church of God. The remnant according to the election of grace that are, or have been, found in Gentile Christendom, have no Church-blessing, no spiritual blessing of any kind, that is not derived from the fatness of the root of the Abrahamic Olive Tree. If they who receive of that fatness are not thereby constituted members of the one true only Church, there is no Church at all. Destroy the truths of the eleventh of Romans, and you destroy the record of the methods of God's mercy in dealing both with Jew and Gentile. Receive the truth of that chapter, and you will

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attain a sure conviction, such as no circumstances can shake, that all the saints of every Dispensation are associated for ever and ever in the same blessings, and the same fatness; and this, the Dispensation of the fulness of times that shall succeed the Millennial Age will fully disclose. If we believe not these things we believe not in "the communion of saints." Oneness in glory is their portion.

We have ever to remember that the Rock on which the Church is builded is not the Spirit, or any grace or gift communicated by the Spirit. The bestowments of the Spirit may, and do vary, in degree and in kind, in different individuals and in different Dispensations: but the Rock is unchangeably one; and that Rock is CHRIST. Christ alone is the Rock of salvation; and He became that Rock in virtue of the work accomplished by Him in the earth as the obeying Surety of His believing people. "By the obedience of the One shall the many be constituted righteous." (Rom. v.) "Like precious faith WITH US in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ," are words which the Apostles would apply to every member of the household of faith, past, present, and to come. The time indeed is yet future when Jerusalem and the nation of Israel as a whole, will hear and welcome the blessed words, "This is that which shall be to her [Jerusalem] proclaimed, JEHOVAH IS OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."*

* See Hebrew at foot of p. 34. The habit of the Hebrew is to omit the copula. In English it should be expressed.

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(Jeremiah xxxiii. 16.) As soon as Jerusalem and Israel hear these words believingly, they will be on the Rock; and *as a consequence thereof* (not as a cause) the Lord God will come and dwell with them, and the name of that City shall be from that time forth, Jehovah-shammah, the Lord is there. (Ezekiel xlviii. 35.) Virtually, it is not otherwise with believers now. It is true, indeed, that there is no manifested glory; no reigning city; yet all believers may say, "Jehovah is our righteousness," and as a consequence, God the Holy Ghost dwells with them, and is in them. The spiritual blessings of spiritual Israel we forestall; so that in spiritual things the words of Israel's future joy become the language of our present confidence. Converted Israel by and by, and all who are of faith now, are but different parts of the same family, finally to be united as one glorified Church in those New Heavens and New Earth for which we and they are alike to wait. "The Church of the first-born ones" (that is, all those who shall rise in the first resurrection and share during the Millennium the heavenly glory of their Lord), and converted Israel, and all other members of the family of faith on earth, will alike say till the Adamic heavens and earth end, "We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein righteousness dwelleth." When the Dispensation of "the fulness of times" (the Dispensation that succeeds the Millennium) shall have

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come, then, and not till then, will the Church *as a whole* be complete, and not till then will the Heavenly City descend into the New Earth prepared for her. The Millennial saints will not be excluded from that common meeting-place of the redeemed. "Gather my saints together unto me—those that have made a covenant with me by SACRIFICE," are words sufficient to decide this and every question that concerns the unity of the redeemed in glory. As used in the Psalm they pertain to the commencement of the Millennium ; but the truth embodied in them will equally guide the action of God at the Millennium's close.

The words, "Jehovah is our righteousness," are words which sufficiently declare the meritorious agency by which all the blessings of the redeemed are earned. Our ruin as men was earned by Adam's *act* in *sinning;* as believers, our deliverance and exaltation and glory have been earned by Christ's *act* in *obeying.* "As by the disobedience of one the many were constituted sinners, so by the obedience of One shall the many be constituted righteous." Before the world was, Jehovah the Son voluntarily undertook to be the Sponsor and Surety of all whom the Father gave to Him, that He might bring them as "sons unto glory." They needed rescue, and they needed merits, for they were lost sinners. By becoming, as their Surety, *legally* one with them, and so acting towards God in their stead, He associated them (as soon as they were

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brought to Him through faith) with that condition of perfected service which He for them had, in life and death, rendered. Accordingly, they, though not doing what He did, nor suffering what He suffered, are nevertheless treated on the ground of (ἐφ' ᾧ) having done what He did, and having suffered what He suffered; for, by the appointment of God, a legal oneness subsists between Jesus and all for whom Jesus served. Such was the method of God's salvation. So were fulfilled the words, "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded." (1 Peter ii. 6.) The precious stone was laid, not in Heaven but in earth: it was laid in Zion: it was laid in death—judicial death—death under wrath: yet it was a living stone and precious, and to you that believe, says the Apostle, that preciousness belongs. Is this verse, quoted by Peter from Isaiah, and applied to us in this present Dispensation, to be refused to Israel? Does not God speak of it as the very point on which all His dealings with Israel in covenanted mercy turn? Christ's righteousness presented for us in His sacrificial death was a *meritorious* righteousness. No obedience of a mere creature could be meritorious as His was. We, if we should do all that was commanded us, would be but "unprofitable servants:" we should merely have done that which it was "our duty to do." But He was "Jehovah's fellow." His service was altogether

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voluntary and unconstrained. Consequently it was meritorious; and because of the dignity of the Person, it was infinitely meritorious; and thus a rewardableness attaches to it too vast for us to estimate: but God has estimated it, and according to His estimate thereof is the rewardableness of the redeemed. The redeemed are "God's inheritance." (Eph. i. 18.) They are "in Him that is true, even the true God and eternal Life." They are filled to the full (*πεπληρωμενοι*, Coloss. ii. 10), in Him who is the Head of all principality and power. They are Christ's mystical body, and as Head over all things governmentally, He has been given also to be Head (in the power of vital union) to the Church, which thus becomes His mystical "body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." And because they are this, the Holy Ghost, as the seal and earnest of the coming glory, is given, that we might *know* (not that we might *have*) the things that have been freely given us of God (*τα χαρισθεντα ὑπο θεου*). Important words these! They teach us that, howsoever great the resulting blessings (and they are vast, and to us unsearchable) yet they are but results—results of the infinite meritoriousness imputed to us in virtue of that legal Surety-oneness which God gave to us in Christ. The service that He performed for us in virtue of that Surety-oneness becomes the meritorious cause of all subsequent imparted blessing. Union and fellowship with Christ in life and glory, and

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all the powers of thought and action thence resulting, are the results, not the cause of the bestowments which grace has conferred simply and only because of the external work of our Surety, who served for us, and made us heirs of glory, not when *living* members of His body, but when sinners. He died for the ungodly. "While we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

I dwell on this subject at greater length than I should have desired, because of its vast importance. It is a question on which, perhaps, more than any other, Satan has ever striven to confuse and undermine the faith of Christ's people, and never more than at the present time. And he has wonderfully succeeded. A person, prominent in profession of faith and service, lately said to me, "I do not object generally to what you say respecting Atonement and its results; but I reject, altogether, the use you have made of Romans v. 21. In speaking of the grace that reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord, you said that 'the righteousness' meant an external righteousness performed for us by the Lord Jesus Christ and imputed to us: I, on the contrary, maintain that it is a righteousness wrought IN us, and maintained IN us by Him, and so grace reigns over us." A momentous difference this! They who teach that grace reigns over us unto eternal life because of righteousness infused, may imagine they hold the doctrine of Atonement

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as taught in Scripture; but they hold it only in name. The moment after the Apostles died the professing Church eschewed the doctrine of *Imputation*, and put *Impartation* in its room. At the Reformation, for a time, there was a Revival; but it soon languished. The Reformers died; and few now recognise the value of their distinctive testimonies. Of late years there has scarcely been a book published on "Sanctity," or "Holiness," or "Prophecy," that does not, more or less, undermine the doctrine of Imputed Righteousness, either by failing to distinguish aright between our "legal oneness" with our Surety, and the subsequent relations thence resulting, or else by dissociating from the legal oneness, results, which (by God's appointment) are inseparably connected therewith. This last is done by all who exclude either the Old Testament Saints, or the Millennial Saints from the Church of God in glory. All such, if they profess to receive the doctrine of Imputed Righteousness, hold it only in name. They cannot hold it as it is taught in Scripture; for, by the Imputation of Christ's righteousness, all to whom it pertains, are brought into the possession of a meritoriousness whose value is infinite, and secures the inheritance of "all things." The Scripture knows of no salvation that does not involve *joint-heirship* with Christ; and joint-heirship with Him involves the inheritance of "all things."

The promises given by God to His redeemed

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people are not rendered uncertain by being gradually fulfilled. The promise given in Christ before the world was, has been very gradually developed. The light granted to Abel, and Enoch, and Noah, was less than that granted to Abraham. That granted to Abraham was less than that granted to Moses. That granted to Moses was less than that granted at Pentecost. These dispensational differences were great and important, but they affect not the pillar of our strength, for that is found in Immanuel's work which He wrought, apart from us, by Himself alone. It was a sacrificial work, wrought on behalf of the whole family of faith, from Adam and Eve, down to the last Millennial saint who shall believe. It is the one oblation of the Holy One that gives to every believer in every Dispensation his title to all the grace, love, glory, and blessing, that will make the Church what it will be in its final perfectness. The electing love of God in choosing us before the world was, and appointing for us a Surety who should by His own meritorious service provide a sure title unto glory, may be termed the *root* blessing in the economy of grace. The separate and independent action of our Surety, whereby the title to all fulness of glory is secured, may be looked on as the *trunk* in the tree of blessing. The resulting bestowments of God's grace, partly granted now, but fully to be developed in eternity, may be regarded as *branch-blessings*—sure to be possessed, sooner or later, by

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all who are associated with the root and stem, but not necessarily made *actually* theirs until eternity comes. We who live after Pentecost have more of the developed or *branch-blessings* than the Old Testament Saints had, for although (as I have before said) they had the Spirit as the Spirit of servantship (δουλειας, Rom. viii. 15), they were not treated as those who were brought into the full "condition of sonship" (υἱοθεσια), and therefore the Spirit as the Spirit of son-condition (πνευμα υἱοθεσιας) was not given to them whilst on earth. To us it is given, not that we might *have*, but that we might "*know* the things that have been freely given unto us by God." (1 Cor. ii. 12.) But although we have in one sense received the condition of sons, yet in another sense we have not, for in Rom. viii. 23, we are described as still waiting for it—"waiting for the condition of sonship, to wit, the redemption of the body." If, then, we who do not attain the full development of son-condition on earth, are not thereby excluded from its future full development in Heaven, why should we exclude the Old Testament Saints from that full final development, on the ground that they had only a restricted development whilst on earth? In our case, as well as theirs, development whilst we are on earth is restricted. Distinction, therefore, must be made between—

I. Blessings promised merely;

II. Blessings secured fully in title, through the

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finished service of our Substitute, and also partially received;

III. Blessings fully communicated.

They who have *the Title* will ultimately have *all* the results.

Nor must we forget that wonderful narrative of Abraham's triumph over opposing strength, recorded in the fourteenth of Genesis. Mighty hosts issuing from the very homes of Asiatic power (of which Shinar [Babylonia] and Elam [Persia] were two) swept over Syria, and entered Canaan. Their triumph was complete: five kings succumbed to them, when Abraham, aroused by the capture of his kinsman Lot, hastily armed his servants (three hundred and eighteen was their number), attacked the mighty myriads of the foe, and overthrew them utterly. God "gave them as dust to his sword, and as driven stubble to his bow." (See Isaiah xli. 2.) It was one of the most marvellous acts that God had as yet performed in the midst of men. "The isles saw it, and feared; the ends of the earth were afraid, and drew near, and came," and fled to their idols for refuge against this unexpected intervention of supernatural strength. The nations trembled; but those who, like Melchisedek, feared God, rejoiced. As Abraham returned from the slaughter of the kings, Melchisedek, king of Salem (king of righteousness and king of peace), met him. And Melchisedek was the priest of the Most High God, and he blessed Abraham, and said, "Blessed be Abraham of the Most

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High God, possessor of heaven and earth." Often are we accustomed to read this narrative; but do we ponder it? Do we read it merely as a tale of the past, or do we see in it a record premonitory of things yet to come? A time is drawing nigh when a feeble remnant, whom grace will rescue and strengthen in the midst of crushed and down-trodden Israel, shall, though compassed by foes mightier and more terrible than those which confronted Abraham, be suddenly strengthened, even as Abraham was, and brought into that *final* triumph over the world's unregenerate might which the victory of Abraham foreshadowed. "In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one that mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." (Zech. xii. 8-10.) And who will meet Israel in that day of sorrow and of triumph? Who will comfort them? He whom Melchisedek typified. Jesus, the true King of Righteousness and of Peace, will, as the Priest

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of the Most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth, meet Israel, even as the typical Melchisedek met Abraham, and will pronounce over them words of blessing like to those that were spoken over the head of Abraham. Joyfully then will Israel own Him as their Priest, their King, and their God; whilst He, according to the grace of Salem and the righteousness of His own great name, will cherish and comfort them. "This is that which shall be to her [Israel] proclaimed, Jehovah is our Righteousness." * Abraham, therefore, and Israel, when brought (as they by-and-by will be) into the one family of faith, will alike stand under the fulness of the blessings earned and secured for them by the service of the true Melchisedek. Through Him they will inherit all fulness of life, love, grace and glory. If there could be any question of the exclusion of any part of the redeemed from that fulness, the question would be with respect to us, sinners of the Gentiles. Are we excluded? No: we too are taught to say, "We have a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek; one who ever liveth to make intercession for them who come unto God by Him. Abraham has in Him a Surety, a Sacrifice, a Risen Head, a Priest and a King. Converted Israel will have in Him a Surety, a Sacrifice, a Risen Head, Priest and King. We cannot destroy (why should we wish to destroy?) this unity of blessing that sovereign grace has given. Shall we

* Jer. xxxiii. 16. וְזֶה אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרָא־לָהּ יְהוָה צִדְקֵנוּ

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repudiate it? They who have it not must perish. There is only one salvation.

Of all the Dispensations that yet have been, there is none in which there has been such disastrous failure as that in which Gentile Christendom has been the professed witness for God. To that Dispensation we belong. Its symbol in Scripture is a cankered olive branch—a branch that has not continued in God's goodness; and although, through God's grace, some fruit-bearing twigs are still found, yet they are few and feeble, checked in growth and hindered in development. "This know, that in the last days perilous times shall come. Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse." "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of the greater part" (*των πολλων*) of Christ's own people, "shall wax cold." "Endurance" and "holding fast," rather than energy and vigour, is to be the prevailing characteristic even of the true members of the family of faith. It is while contemplating this scene of weakness and desolation that the Lord is represented as saying, "Or ever I was aware, my soul set me upon the chariots of my willing people." His soul turned to the coming period when Israel His people will be made willing in the day of His power. Blessed indeed will be the hour when He shall say, "Return, return, O bride of Solomon."

When converted Israel shall succeed to the place of testimony that has been so long and so unworthily held by Gentile Christendom, there will be for

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the first time seen in earth a corporate body established in a strength that shall know no decrease. The light which it shall be given to them to maintain shall never wane: it shall go on diffusing and developing itself till it mingle itself into the brightness and glory of that day in which "all things" shall be made "new." The words, "Arise, shine: for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee," are words not to be limited to the governmental greatness and glory of Jerusalem: she shall indeed be "a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of her God" (Is. lxii. 3); but in addition to this she shall be the appointed witness of God's saving Truth. Her "righteousness shall go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." She shall be the first body in the earth whose corporate standing shall be indefectibly sustained. What she begins to be, that she will continue to be. "Thy people shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified." Though many who have walked well and holily in days of sorrow, have been found to fail when brought into the sunshine of prosperity and greatness, yet so it shall not be with Israel. Through grace they shall be faithful to the Lord their God; and whilst some have glorified Him in weakness and sorrow, they shall glorify Him in strength and exaltation. Gentile Christianity has been wise in

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its own conceits, and boasted itself, and sought to reign in kingship when God appointed it to suffer: but Israel in the midst of their high exaltation and glory will say, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child. Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and for ever." (Ps. cxxxi.) Gentile Christianity has had its history marked by strife and division. There have been many tongues; many teachers; and, as a result, hopeless discord; but in Israel there shall be holy unity. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments: as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." (Ps. cxxxiii.) In Israel too shall be found the power of holy and accepted worship. "Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the Lord. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord. The Lord that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion." (Ps. cxxxiv.) Great grace will rest upon them, so that their ways and character shall stand in wondrous contrast with the feebleness and faith-

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lessness of our present Dispensation. Having the same calling in the grace of Christ, they will practically glorify Him in a way that we have not done. Are these the persons that are to be excluded from the Church in its final glory? It would be difficult to characterise aright the monstrosity of the folly, or, I should rather say, the evil of such a thought. "You" [Gentile believers], says the Apostle, "are, I thankfully acknowledge, '*first fruits*,' and I would not diminish aught of the vastness of that blessing; but if the first-fruits be holy, the lump (which is the second-fruits) is holy likewise, and if the root be holy, so are the branches." "And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert graffed in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee." See also the words of the Apostle to the Gentile Church in the second of the Ephesians: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands: that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." What are we here taught? We are taught that unless we are incorporated through faith into the Commonwealth

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of Israel, we are lost. We have no part with Christ. And what does the Lord Jesus say? Speaking to some who belonged to the Jewish flock, He said, "Other sheep I have which are not of this [Jewish] fold [but are Gentiles]: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice: and there shall be one FLOCK (ποιμνη), and one Shepherd." Shall we then contradict this, and say that there are two flocks, two Shepherds, two Commonwealths, and two Olive-trees? We have need to remember the words, "Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins;" for what can be more presumptuous than attempts to alter the declarations of God's written Word—written that it might endure.

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THE CONDITION OF SONS.

REMARKS ON THE RIGHT TRANSLATION OF *υἱοθεσια*, IN EPHESIANS I. 5.

Having predestinated us unto the condition of sons, through Jesus Christ, unto Himself.

"Adoption" must not be accepted as the translation of *υἱοθεσια*, anywhere in the New Testament.

In other writings it is found in the sense of "adoption;" but that such a meaning is utterly irreconcilable with its use in the New Testament is evident from this, that *υἱοθεσια* is there used not to indicate a relation into which strangers or aliens are brought, but a condition into which those are brought *who are already sons.* Now it is obviously impossible to speak of those who are *already sons, and recognised as sons,* being afterwards *adopted.* Adoption may be predicated of strangers, but it cannot be predicated of those who are *already* sons.

That all believers were from the beginning regarded by God as His sons, is expressly taught us in Gal. iii. and iv. Nevertheless, says the Apostle, although the saints of the Old Testament were truly sons and heirs, yet "the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but

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is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father." Such was the condition of the saints of God during the time that they were under the Law as their tutor. They were like children in a condition of pupillage—placed out at school in order that they might be disciplined and taught. "The Law was our schoolmaster until Christ" (that is, until Christ came—*not to bring us to* Christ), and until that time of schooling was past, the saints of God (though sons and heirs) were not admitted to the condition of sons—the condition, that is, which pertains to a child, who, having passed through its season of pupillage, returns to his father's mansion, there formally to assume the standing and privileges that befit him as son and heir.

The children of God, whilst under the Law, did not enjoy the proper privileges of sonship. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the standing, or condition of sons." (Gal. iv. 4.) Whilst the tutorial dispensation of the Law lasted, they, although sons, differed nothing from servants, and received the Spirit as the Spirit of servantship (πνευμα δουλειας, Rom. viii. 15), causing them to have the feelings of servants in that "house" or economy over which Moses was as a servant placed (Heb. iii. 5): but as soon as the accomplishment of redemption brought them into the recognised standing and privileges of sons, in that "house" or

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economy over which Christ was *as a son* placed, they received the Spirit, not as the Spirit of servantship (δουλειας) again to fear, but as the Spirit of sonship or son-condition (υἱοθεσιας), crying, Abba, Father. (Rom. viii. 15.) The accomplishment of redemption brought those who were already sons, but in a state of pupillage, into their proper son-condition or standing. It is obvious how completely such a use of υἱοθεσια excludes the possibility of interpreting it as meaning "adoption."

Nor is this all. Even we who live since God sent forth His Son to redeem, and who are not only sons, but have been brought into an acknowledged condition of sonship, of which the Holy Spirit has been sent as the seal, do yet in another sense wait for the condition of sonship. We wait for the redemption of our body, when our condition as to all outward circumstances will be in harmony (which at present it is not) with the condition of spiritual privilege and blessing into which we, as sons of God, are already brought. Until the redemption of our body we shall not attain our full condition of sonship. "We wait," says the Apostle, "for the condition of sons, to wit, the redemption of our body." Here then, again, it is abundantly evident that "adoption" could not express the sense conveyed by υἱοθεσια.

But even if υἱοθεσια, in its New Testament use, had not been limited, as it is, to the denoting a change of condition in those who are *already* sons,—even if it had been used to denote our transfer from

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the condition in which we are naturally, into that new condition which pertains to us when we are brought through faith into the family of God,—even then "adoption" would not have been a suitable translation. For "adoption" does not merely convey the notion of transfer from one family into another; it expresses a relation that is essentially *supposititious.* An adopted son is in no true sense the son of the person by whom he is adopted. The relationship is a supposed one. He is merely considered to be a son by a legal fiction. No device of human law can destroy the fictitiousness of the relationship. It is utterly beyond the power of man to turn non-realities into realities. But it is otherwise in respect to the relationship to which God brings us as His children. It is indeed true that we are transferred into a new condition, translated into a new family: but our transfer is accompanied by *regeneration,* involving the actual bestowment of a new nature. We are truly born of God. Although not sons in the sense in which Christ is Son, for He is the *eternal* Son, *one* with the Father and with the Holy Ghost, "God over all blessed for ever," yet we too are sons, not in a fictitious but in a real sense—"born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." It is obvious that "adoption" which must, as used amongst men, necessarily retain its supposititious sense, could never rightly express that reality of sonship into which believers are "*born*" through the regenerating

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power of God's Spirit. The meaning of *υἱοθεσια* in the New Testament always is, the *status* or condition of sons. We are not only sons, but we have also the portion and position of sons—*here*, by communion through the Spirit with our Heavenly Father, and by the knowledge through faith of the blessings irrevocably bestowed on us in Christ:—*hereafter*, by being brought into the actual inheritance of glory as joint-heirs with Him, and conformed unto His likeness in resurrection. Neither the *υἱοθεσια*, nor the *παλιγγενεσια* (regeneration) will in the fulness of their results be manifested till the resurrection of life; but in that resurrection all believers of every dispensation will share.

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THE DOCTRINE OF MARCION RESPECTING THE OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS.

AMONG the many indications of the rapidity with which men's minds are departing from the Truth, there are few more ominous than the extensive diffusion in this country of a system of doctrine that teaches that all the Old Testament Saints (although purchased unto God by the precious blood of Jesus) are to be excluded for ever from the Church, and from the Church's glory—that stigmatizes as Jewish, and as not designed for the Church, those very instructions which the Lord Himself, in His parting words to His disciples, expressly commanded to be taught to us*—that teaches that the Apostolate of St. Paul is of a higher order than that of the Twelve, and that his Gospel was different from theirs—that denies that the fulfilment of the Law by Jesus was essential to the salvation of the Church—that (instead of teaching, according to Scripture, that the Father hath "reconciled us *in the body of Christ's*

* See last two verses of Matthew.

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flesh through death,") speaks of our being "justified in a risen Christ"—that confines to the Jews (as being alone formally placed under the Law) the text that speaks of Christ "being made a curse for us" (Gal. iii. 13), and imagines that the Church owes its salvation not to such a redemption, but to union with the Person of the Son. These, and like things, are now being extensively taught and received. Recently I heard one of the sustainers of this system affirm that there are "two Gospels, two ways, and two ends of salvation." He might have added, two Christs (for his system required it)—a Christ for the salvation of the Church (or what they suppose to be the Church), and a Christ for the salvation of the saints of Israel and others.

Few, probably, are aware of the origin of these and like doctrines. Their origin is evidently Gnostic. Marcion, a Gnostic of the second century, appears to have been the first who taught his disciples to reject as not properly Christian, everything that he was pleased to stigmatize as *Jewish*. Modern German neology, which has ransacked antiquity in order to become eclectic of falsehood, has disinterred and remoulded many a Gnostic heresy, and so they have been introduced into this country; although in England Marcionism has not as yet been fostered so much by neologians as by others.

The connexion between Marcionism and Germanism has thus been remarked on by Vaughan:—

"What Marcion is said to have done literally,

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that Schleiermacher does virtually in his system; for [*i.e.*, instead of] 'I am not come to destroy the Law and the Prophets,' *he reads the converse.* . . . The dread of everything Jewish, the general characteristic of Gnosticism, has been carried to its extreme in modern times by Baüer of Tubingen, who has misspent no ordinary learning and ability in the attempt to show that the history of early Christianity is that of a struggle out of a Judaized atmosphere into a purer element; and that when the Christian religion shall have been entirely freed from the Jewish prejudice which narrowed the mind of our Lord (!!!) and His immediate followers, its work will be accomplished, and the law of love universal. The Judæophobia, as one may call it, has been exemplified among ourselves of late in a 'History of the Hebrew Monarchy.'"—*Vaughan's Essay on the Writings of Schleiermacher*, p. 78.

Marcion carried his rejection of everything *Jewish* so far that he excluded Abraham and the Old Testament Saints not only from the Church, but from salvation. "False," says Irenæus, "is Marcion, and so are his followers, who exclude from the inheritance *Abraham*, to whom the Spirit hath borne testimony by many others as well as by Paul, saying, 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.' So also the Lord bore testimony to him . . . . saying, 'When ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of heaven, but you yourselves cast out.' This,

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therefore, is manifest, that they who disallow Abraham's salvation and frame the idea of another God besides Him who made the promise to Abraham, are themselves aliens from the kingdom of God, and are excluded from the inheritance of incorruption, seeing that they set at naught and blaspheme God, who introduceth through Jesus Christ Abraham to the kingdom of heaven as well as his seed, that is, the Church, upon which is conferred the adoption and the inheritance promised to Abraham."—*Irenæus.* Lib. iv., cap. viii., § 1.

Marcion not only rejected the Law and the Prophets, but even in the New Testament he refused to receive any of the Epistles except those of St. Paul, not including the Hebrews, and he rejected all the Gospels except that of Luke, which, however, as well as the Pauline Epistles he mutilated, and received only in part.

The Marcionite "aversion," says Lardner, "to the Old Testament was so great, that on this account they mutilated many passages in the New in those books which they admitted, rejecting all that related to the Law and to the Prophets, or which were quoted thence as plainly foretelling the coming of Jesus Christ, or which spoke of His Father as the Creator of the world."—*Lardner, History of Heretics.* Chap. x., § 33.

As regards the Marcionite notion that "Paul alone knew the truth, and that to him *the mystery was manifested by revelation,*" Irenæus writes as follows.

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"With regard to those [the Marcionites] who allege *that Paul alone knew the truth, and that to him the mystery was manifested by revelation*, let Paul himself convict them when he says, that one and the same God wrought in Peter for the Apostolate of the circumcision, and in himself for the Gentiles. Peter, therefore, was an Apostle of that very God, whose was also Paul: and Him whom Peter preached as God among those of the circumcision, and likewise the Son of God, did Paul [declare] also among the Gentiles. For our Lord never came to save Paul alone, nor is God so limited in means, that He should have but one Apostle who knew the dispensation of His Son. . . . . Again, in the Epistle to the Corinthians, when Paul had recounted all those who had seen God after the resurrection, he says in continuation, 'But whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed,' acknowledging as one and the same the preaching of all those who saw God after the resurrection from the dead."—*Irenæus*, book iii. chap. xiii., § 1.

It would be impossible within the limits of the present paper to detail all the omissions and alterations which Marcion made in the Gospel of Luke, which he professed to receive, and in the Epistles of Paul. They may be found at length in Epiphanius and Irenæus, or in Lardner. I will content myself with a few examples.

In Luke xiii. 28, instead of reading, "When ye shall see *Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets* in the kingdom of God, and you your-

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selves thrust out," Marcion reads it, "When ye shall see *all the just* in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves rejected," &c. In Gal. iii. Marcion omitted the sixth, seventh, and eighth verses, in order to get rid of the mention of Abraham and of the gospel as having been preached to him; on which account he ought also to have omitted part of the ninth verse, "*συν τῳ πιστῳ Αβρααμ—with faithful Abraham*, and according to Tertullian's manner of stating the argument against him, this was the case."—*Lardner*, § 43.*

He also omitted, according to Rufinus, the two last chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, ending the Epistle with the 23rd verse of the fourteenth chapter. We can well understand his reason for this. Not only is the fifteenth chapter full of quotations from the Jewish Prophets respecting the call of the Gentiles into participation of Jewish blessings (as for example, "Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people"), but in the sixteenth chapter the Apostle declares

* Tertullian's words are: "When he also adds, 'for ye are all the children of faith,' it becomes clear that what the heretic's (Marcion's) industry erased was the mention of Abraham's name, for by faith the Apostle declares us to be 'children of Abraham;' and after mentioning him, he expressly calls us 'children of faith' also . . and of whose faith, if not Abraham's?" . . . . "To Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ.' Fie on Marcion's sponge! But indeed it is superfluous to dwell on what he has erased, when he may be more effectually confuted from what he has retained."—*Tertullian against Marcion*, book v., ch. iii. and iv.

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that he used the prophetic writings, *i.e.*, the writings of the Old Testament, in making known the Gospel which he was sent to preach. This was the very thing that Marcion denied.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, amongst other alterations, he erased, in the 20th verse of the second chapter, the word "*prophets*" ("built upon the foundation of Apostles and Prophets"), for Marcion saw that all his system must fall if he admitted that the two lines of foundation laid respectively by the Apostles and Prophets were knit into the unity of the same building by both resting on the same chief one corner-stone, Jesus.

These examples may suffice. The fact that Marcion saw the necessity of erasing these and like words was a sufficient acknowledgment of their conclusiveness if permitted to stand. Which shall we say is the greater sin, to cancel the word of Scripture, or to destroy by false exposition their plain unmistakeable meaning?

The Marcionites also adopted the heresy of the Docetæ, and taught that Christ had *the appearance* of a human body, but not the reality—that He appeared to have flesh, but really had not, so that His sufferings were apparent merely.* They made no distinction between "flesh" in a physical, and "flesh" in a *moral* sense; and believed that everything *material* must partake of evil.

* "Nothing," says Tertullian, "substantial can be allowed to be effected by an unsubstantial thing,—nothing full by a vacuity.

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It must not be supposed, however, that Marcion, in rejecting the Old Testament, rejected it as untrue. He evidently believed its truth, but contended that the God and the Christ of the Old Testament were different from the God and the Christ of the New. Else he could not have avowed his belief in a Jewish Christ to come. "Marcion," says Lardner, "acknowledged Jesus to be Christ, but not the Christ foretold by the Jewish Prophets. He could not deny that a Christ or Messiah was there spoken of, but he said a Person different from our Lord Jesus Christ was there meant. He allowed, as Tertullian expresses it, that the Prophets of the Creator had promised a Saviour to the Jewish nation, who should deliver them out of the hands of their enemies, and restore them to freedom. But he pretended that this Deliverer was not the Son of God; and that the oracles of the Old Testament did not agree to Jesus Christ. So that 'this man,' as Tertullian observes, 'who was so adverse to Judaism did himself Judaize in the most shameful manner.' 'Marcion,' says that writer, 'is for two Christs—one who appeared in the time of Tibe-

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If the habit were putative, the action was putative; if the workers were imaginary, the works were imaginary. On this principle, too, the sufferings of Christ will be found not to warrant faith in Him. For He suffered nothing who did not truly suffer."—*Tertullian*, III. 8.

Some of the followers of Marcion, however, believed Christ to have real flesh, though they would not admit that He was born. This seems to have been the notion of Apelles.

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rius for the salvation of all nations, and another the restorer of the Jewish state, who is yet to come.'*

"The doctrine of two Christs is also asserted by the Marcionite in the dialogue ascribed to Origen. In a work also said to be written by Athanasius, we are informed that Marcion supposed that as Jesus came from the *good* God, so there was to be another from the *just* God, because each of them was to be the father of a Christ peculiar to Himself; the *good* God of one, the *just* God of another."—*Lardner*, II. 21. He drew a distinction between true moral perfection, which, according to him, "consists in love and goodness, whose essence is only to communicate itself, only to bless, to make happy, to redeem; and mere justice, which metes out everything by desert, rewards and punishes, requites good with good, and evil with evil, which gives birth to mere outward discipline, but can communicate no power of moral enthusiasm—this (says Neander) was Marcion's great *practical* and fundamental idea which formed the nucleus of his whole theory. But between love and a justice that revealed itself in punishment he found no means of reconciliation."—*Neander*, vol. ii., p. 140. Hence, believing matter and flesh to be essentially connected with evil, he taught that the God and the Christ of the Old Testament and of the Jews, were

* The later developments of Marcion's system were probably adopted by him from Cerdo, whom he met at Rome, and who seems to have advanced further in Gnosticism than Marcion had when Cerdo met him.

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distinct from the God and Christ of the New Testament revealed to the Church, which comes as a kind of parenthesis between the ancient Jewish period, and the future Jewish period when the Christ of the Jews will appear and effect their deliverance.

"The point of practical importance with Marcion," says Neander, "was to assert the absolute newness of the creation by Christianity; to sever every link of connection between it and the world as it had subsisted before." "While he gave an exclusive prominence to the love of God, the revelation of which in the gospel had penetrated his whole soul (!!) he allowed all the other divine attributes to retire out of view. Seeking only to insist upon that which belonged peculiarly to Christianity, but rending it from its connection with the groundwork of the Old Testament, he determined to know nothing at all of a retribution grounded on the holiness of God."*—*Neander*, vol. ii., p. 140.

"It seems (I still quote from Neander), although it is a point which cannot be determined with certainty,† that Marcion taught that the Messianic predictions of the Old Testament would still be actually accomplished in behalf of the believers in the Demiurge—[Marcion's name for the God of the

* That is, he excluded such acting in righteousness from the God and Christ of the Church, but not from the God and Christ of the Jews, as will be seen from the remarks below.

† The words of Tertullian clearly show that Marcion expected a Christ yet to come to the Jews. Tertullian's words

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Jews]. The Messiah promised by the Demiurge would yet appear and bring to a rigid judgment those who had not been freed from his power by faith in *the higher Christ*, and awakening those who had died *righteous* according to the Old Testament, would unite them all in a millennial reign of earthly felicity. The *eternal heavenly kingdom* to which the Christians belonged would then form the direct antithesis to this perishable *earthly* kingdom. The souls of Christians would lay aside their gross bodies as the bird rises out of the egg. . . . . The God of love [*i.e.* the God of the Church] does not punish ; those however, who refuse to accept the proffered fellowship with Him will fall under the power of the Demiurge [the God of the Jews] and His avenging justice. Whoever, on the other hand, enters into fellowship with the Father through faith in the Son of God, becomes partaker, even on earth, of *a divine life* superior to the power of the Demiurge and of matter. For him there is no longer any judgment. Delivered from the power of the Demiurge, he is under the special protection of the God of love. . . . From the whole context of Marcion's ideas resulted the antithesis between those who remained subject

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are, "when to these are added their Christs, the one which appeared in the time of Tiberius" [whom they believed to have had the *appearance* of flesh only] "and the other which is promised by the Creator or God of the Jews."—*Tertullian*, book I., chap. xv.

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to the Demiurge's government, and those who, released from his power, become objects of the providential care of the Supreme God, whom He trains for His kingdom, with whom all things shall work together for good."—*Neander,* vol. ii., p. 147.*

The history of Marcion affords a memorable example of the manner in which men, while pursuing a phantom of imagined spirituality, can be drawn into a place of direct antagonism to God and to His Word. There can be little question that Marcion was sincere. He was zealous, energetic, and self-denying even to austerity. Ephraem Syrus says that Marcion "acquired by his asceticism a deceptive show of sanctity." In his early days he is said to have given his money to the Church. (Pecuniam in primo calore fidei Ecclesiæ contulit.) To *his* mind matter was synonymous with evil; and flesh, in its physical sense, identical with sin. Absorption into something immaterial was, in his estimate, essential to salvation. The assumption of real flesh by the Son of God, and

* The distinction drawn by Marcion, between the condition of the Church and those whom he imagines to be placed in a subordinate condition of blessing under the God of the Jews, is very marked. It would seem, however, that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the rest of the Old Testament saints, were excluded by Marcion even from this subordinate blessing. His statement as to them is most revolting. I will not transcribe it. It may be seen in *Epiphanius*, lib. I., § 42, and still more fully in *Irenæus*, lib. I., chap. XXVII.

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the resurrection of the body, he denied. But the Scripture stood in his way; it contradicted his thoughts, and therefore the greater part of Scripture he avowedly rejected. He would have been more consistent and more honest, if he had rejected the whole.* For he acknowledged not either the God, or the Christ, or the redemption, of which the Scriptures speak. The Scripture speaks only of the God of Israel and of the Christ of Israel, and of a redemp-

* It is better for the interests of Truth that its adversaries should reject Scripture rather than that they should professedly own it, and then undermine it by sophistical subtleties of interpretation. In Germany, on the subject of justification, laborious efforts have been made by many writers to misinterpret the words of Scripture, and so to use Scripture as a weapon against the Truth. This habit, however, is now being abandoned, and a more audacious (yet more truthful) course adopted. Thus Köllner, one of the modern German commentators, says, "It is clear that the true sense of this passage (Romans iii. 26, 27) entirely agrees with the doctrine of the Church, concerning vicarious satisfaction, as unfolded in the Lutheran symbols. Nevertheless, although it is certain that Paul intended to teach the doctrine of vicarious satisfaction, not merely as a figure (or in the way of accommodation, but as a matter of full personal conviction), yet it is easy to see how he was necessarily led to adopt this view, from the current opinions of the age in which he lived."—(*Köllner*, as quoted by Dr. Charles Hodge, in his commentary on the Romans.) "Such writers" (continues Dr. Hodge) "are at least free from the guilt of *perverting* the Word of God. They allow the Bible to mean what it says, although they refuse to submit to its teaching. This is better than not only refusing to submit, but forcing the Scriptures to teach our own foregone conclusions. In Germany, the subjec-

tion wrought out in the midst of Israel according to the Law and the Prophets—but this God, and this Christ, and this redemption, Marcion scorned.

It is said that Marcion towards the end of his life repented of his heretical course, and sought to counteract its effects. But it was too late. In a world like this, a natural, an appointed buoyancy belongs to the thistle's seed; it floats upon the breeze, and the air's ready current soon diffuses it over the surface of the wide earth. "Thistles shall it bring forth to thee." "Marcion's heresy," says Epiphanius, who flourished about the middle of the fourth century, "is even now existent at Rome and in Italy, in Egypt and Palestine, in Arabia and in Syria, in Cyprus and in Thebais. It is found, too, in the Persian district, and in other places."—*Epiph.*, I., p. 42. "The essential character of Marcion's mind," says Neander, "would make him labour more earnestly and assiduously than other Gnostics in the propagation of his principles. For while others believed it impossible to communicate their higher knowledge to any save a small number of Christians (the spiritual men), Marcion, on the other hand, was convinced that his doctrine was no other than the primitive Christian

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tion of the Bible to philosophy has come to an end. In this country, it is still struggling for liberty. It is desirable that the separation should here, as there, be made complete, between those who bow to the authority of the word of God, and those who acknowledge some higher rule of faith. Then both parties can agree as to what the Bible really teaches."

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one. . . . . He must have felt himself constrained to communicate to all Christians the light of truth which had fallen to his own share. Hence he made frequent journeys, and spent his life in an uninterrupted series of conflicts with heathens and with Christians. To be hated and to suffer he looked upon as the destination of every Christian. 'Fellow objects of hate and fellow-sufferers' (*συμμισουμενοι και συνταλαιπωροι*), was his common form of salutation to his brethren in the faith."—*Neander*, vol. ii., p. 138.

His heresy received from some the condemnation it deserved. The aged Polycarp of Smyrna is said to have met Marcion at Rome. Marcion, who in his earlier days had known Polycarp, accosted him: "Dost thou remember me, Polycarp?" "I do know thee," replied Polycarp, "the first-born of Satan." "Such (says Irenæus, who records the incident) was the horror which the Apostles and their disciples felt against holding even a verbal communication with any corrupters of the truth; as Paul also says: 'a man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition reject, knowing that he that is such is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself.'" —*Irenæus*, III. 3. Such was the comment of Irenæus: such the depth of his feeling respecting departures from the Truth. How utterly contrasted with the serene apathy with which men now contemplate these things, and call their indifferentism, sobermindedness and love! Neander comments on the same incident

as Irenæus. "The old man," says Neander, speaking of Polycarp, "otherwise so amiable, could not extend his love to the enemies of the Gospel; and as such Marcion appeared to him, *for he was unable to discern the Christian element which lay at the root of his very errors*." That is, a man may utterly reject all that God has revealed respecting Himself and His ways, and yet "the Christian element" may be found at "the root of all his errors!"

The heresies of Marcion are scarcely more to be deprecated than the comments of Neander on them. Thus Neander supposes him to have "belonged to the number of those who were first brought to the faith, not by the tradition of the Church, but by their own study of the written word"—that word which he mutilated and blasphemed. "Perhaps," continues Neander, "it was the majesty of Christ as it shone upon him in the contemplation of His life, and the study of His words, that attracted him to Christianity. And the Pauline type of doctrine, which most completely harmonized with his tone of mind, may have been the form in which he first learned to understand Christianity, and which chained his spirit once for all."—*Neander*, vol. ii., p. 133.

Again, Neander writes: "the consciousness of redemption formed the ground-tone of his (Marcion's) religious life: the fact of redemption he regarded as the central point of Christianity. [Redemption, *as revealed in Scripture*, had no place in Marcion's system at all.] . . . . To his heart, filled and glowing

with the image of the God of mercy and compassion who had appeared in Christ, Nature appeared as something wholly inconsistent with the way in which this God had revealed Himself to him in his soul. . . . The same mental tendency which made it impossible for him to recognise in Nature the God of the Gospel, allowed him to see nothing but contrariety, no fundamental unity, between the Old Testament and the New. . . . In the Churches of Asia Minor he believed it impossible to recognise the genuine Christianity which had been preached to them by the Apostle Paul. Accordingly, this conviction may have given rise [to his desire] to purify Christianity from the foreign Jewish elements with which it had been mixed, and to restore it to its primitive form. . . . . And so, step by step, he was continually driven to place the Old and New Testament in sharper contrast to each other," until at last he boldly taught that there was one God and Christ for the Jews, and another God and Christ for the Church.

I will now conclude these already too extended remarks, by a few brief quotations from some of our Protestant Confessions in reference to the inclusion of the Old Testament saints in the one elect body, the Church.

The confession of Dort, after quoting the words, „ Whom he predestinated, them he also called and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified," adds, " This election is not manifold (*i.e.* diverse) *but one and the same of*

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all which are to be saved, both under the Old and New Testament; because the Scripture speaks but of one only good pleasure, purpose and counsel of the will of God by which He hath chosen us from eternity, both unto grace and glory, both unto salvation and the way of salvation, which He hath prepared that we should walk therein." . . . . and "this doctrine, touching God's election, was by God's appointment declared by the Prophets, by Christ Himself, and by the Apostles, as well under the Old Testament as the New."—*Articles of Dort.*, VIII. and XIV.

Also the Confession of Scotland:

"We most constantly believe that God preserved, instructed, multiplied, honoured, decreed, and from death called to life *His Church in all ages, from Adam till the coming of Christ in the flesh.* As we believe in one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so do we most constantly believe that from the beginning there hath been, and now is, and to the end of the world shall be, one Church, that is to say, a company, a multitude of men chosen of God, who rightly worship and entreat Him by true faith in Christ Jesus," &c. —*Art.* V. and XVI.

So also the seventh of our English Articles:

"The Old Testament is not contrary to the New: for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard which feign that the old fathers did look only for transi-

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tory promises. Although the Law given from God to Moses, as touching ceremonies and rites, do not bind Christian men, nor the civil precepts thereof ought of necessity to be received in any commonwealth; yet, notwithstanding, no Christian man is free from the obedience of the Commandments which are called moral."

See also Luther:

"When the Scripture saith that all nations which are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham, it followeth necessarily that all, as well Jews as Gentiles, are accursed without faith, or without faithful Abraham. For the promise of blessing was given to Abraham that in him all nations should be blessed. There is no blessing, then, to be looked for, but only in the promise made unto Abraham, now published by the Gospel throughout the whole world. Therefore whosoever is without that blessing is accursed."—*Luther*, on Gal. iii. 10.

See also Calvin:

"And this is a singular proof of the benevolence of God toward us, that although from the beginning of the world he showed Himself bountiful to His children [the Old Testament saints], He nevertheless so regulated His grace as to provide for the salvation of the *whole* body [in which we, of this dispensation, are included]. What more could any one among ourselves desire than that regard should be had to him in respect of the blessings with which God hath followed up Abraham, Moses, David, &c., *so that*

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with them he might coalesce in the body of Christ?"—*Calvin*, on Heb. xi.

God has made a better provision for us than to allow that our elder brethren, who have preceded us in the path of faith, should be perfected in glory apart from us. The Scripture uses the word "apart" —χωρις. They who are not *apart* must be *together.*

NOTE ON HEB. XI. 40.

"These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise (God having made a better provision for us than that, viz., that they should at present receive the promise), in order that they, apart from us, should not be perfected." The substantive instruction of the passage is contained in the first and last clauses:—"They received not the promise, in order that they might not be perfected apart from us" (χωρις ἡμων). The central parenthetic clause does not teach that God had provided something better for us than for them (that would contradict the word χωρις, *apart from*), but it teaches that He had provided for us a better thing than to allow that they should be perfected apart from us. The word χωρις (*apart from*) could not on the other supposition have been used; for if we had the calling and glory of the Church, and they not, then indeed, we and they should be perfected apart from one another: the very thing which this verse declares to be impossible.

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APPENDIX.

NOTE ON THE STATEMENTS OF CARDINAL MANNING RESPECTING THE OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS.

The doctrines of the Roman Church are, it is well known, most erroneous and false as to the condition of the Old Testament saints whilst militant on the earth. Yet even they, warned perhaps by Marcion's example, refuse to exclude them from the Church in glory. Thus Dr. Manning, in his work on "The Mission of the Holy Ghost," writes as follows:—

"The multitude and fellowship of the just who, from Abel to the Incarnation, had lived and died in faith and union with God, constituted the soul of a body which should be hereafter. They did not constitute the body, but they were waiting for it. They did not constitute the Church, which signifies not only the *election* but the *aggregation* of the servants of God; not only the calling out, but the calling together into one, all those who are united to Him. Some of the Fathers do indeed speak of them as the Church, because they were to the then world what the Church is now to the world of to-day. They belong also to the Church, though it did not then exist, just as the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world, though the sacrifice on Calvary was four thousand years deferred. All grace was from the beginning given through the most precious blood, though as yet it had not been shed. So the mystical body had its members, though as yet it was not created. They were admitted to it when the kingdom of heaven was opened to them, and the Incarnate Word was exalted to His glory as Head over all things to the Church.

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"As, then, till the Incarnation there was no Incarnate Head, so till the day of Pentecost there was no complete organisation."

There are, no doubt, parts of the above statement to which just exception might be taken; but passing these, I quote the passage merely because of its unequivocal acknowledgment of the inclusion of the Old Testament saints in the ultimate glory of the Church. "All grace was from the beginning given through the most precious blood, though as yet it had not been shed," are important words. I question, however, whether these words and the paragraph as a whole, would please the censors of the Vatican, though probably they may be willing to make, for a time, concessions to Protestant prejudices in England.

We must remember, too, that although the words "most precious blood" are blessed words, and grateful to the hearts of of those who understand them according to the Scripture, yet they are suggestive of far different thoughts to the mind of a Romanist. They direct his soul not to the once perfected sacrifice, whereby he that believeth is sanctified and perfected for ever, but he thinks of blood carnally taken by him in material flesh, which he believes that he actually eats, and thus the value of that holy blood becomes his. Unless he carnally eats it he perishes: and so he becomes an idolater and worships a phantom, and does (unless he repents) perish.

Dr. Manning's statements respecting the condition of the Old Testament saints *whilst on earth*, are most objectionable. Thus when he says that "the Church is gathered from the world by baptism, and that into every soul rightly baptised the grace of faith, hope and charity is infused, together with the seven gifts, and a substantial union of the Holy Ghost with the soul is constituted," it is very evident that he excludes the Old Testament saints, while on earth, from the condition into which he pretends that baptism brings, and excludes them from the possession of that LIFE which is the portion of all the regenerate of every dispensation, and which when given involves ever-

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lasting relationship to God as His sons, and heirs of glory. Again, Dr. Manning says, "before the Incarnation, the Holy Spirit wrought in the souls of men, one by one, illuminating, converting, sanctifying, and perfecting the elect. But the union between His presence and the soul was conditional on the correspondence and fidelity of the individual. It was a dissoluble union," &c. (p. 58). And again, "its (Israel's) sacraments were shadows, working *ex opere operantis* by the faith of the receiver, *not by the virtue that went out of them*," &c.

The italics are mine. If all this were true, the Old Testament saints would not have been the subjects of *efficacious* grace at all; and seeing that such grace could not reach them for the first time in another world, they must have been excluded from the company of the regenerated and the saved for ever. He who is not regenerated *here*, will certainly not be regenerated in another world. This doctrine of sacramental grace leads in the same direction as Marcionism. When Dr. Newman began to Romanize, he wrote some letters to the *Christian Observer*, questioning whether the Old Testament saints could be said to have been regenerated, seeing that thev had not received the sacrament of regeneration.

Dr. Manning recognises no distinction between the operation of the Spirit of God in quickening the elect, and His coming personally to dwell in those whom He has quickened. The Old Testament saints were regenerated as truly as we. They had LIFE as truly as we: and although the Spirit was not given to them as the Paraclete, or as the Spirit of son-condition (*υἱοθεσιας*), yet He was given to them as the Spirit of servant-ship (*δουλειας*, Rom. viii. 15), because, though they were sons (see Gal. iv.) they were in state of pupillage until redemption was perfected. "Now I say, that the heir, so long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all." (Gal. iv. 1.) And as the Old Testament saints received acceptance through the fore-seen value of the blood of Immanuel, so

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also they received Life before He, in whom that life was, was manifested in the flesh. As light existed before the sun, and was afterwards in the sun concentrated, and from it dispensed, so life was dispensed to the elect before He came in Whom that life essentially was, and in Whom it was manifested. God fore-acted on what Christ was as fore-ordained. But wherever there is a disposition to misrepresent, or to magnify unduly, the present dispensational standing of the Church, there the sacrificial work of Christ, as alone giving the TITLE to all the blessings brought by redemption, is depreciated, and results which God has made to depend exclusively on Christ's relation to the redeemed, are ascribed not to *Christ's* work, but to *the Spirit*. When this is done the truth of the Gospel is lost. Whether we say that they who are not baptized will not belong to the Church in glory, or that they who did not receive the Spirit in the manner in which He is now dispensationally given, will not belong to the Church in glory, in either case we destroy the truth of the Gospel. *Title to belong* to the Church in glory is founded entirely *on* the work of Christ in redemption. The gift of the Spirit (which is a purchased result of *redemption*) does not give the *title* to membership in the body of Christ, but supplies *the power* of that *associated* action which is needed by those who are called to act together as co-members in one body. Are we to confound *title*, and power to act according to such title?

It is well too that we should remember the words, "And other sheep I have [Gentiles], who are not of this [Jewish] fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice and there shall be one FLOCK (ποιμνη) and one Shepherd. (John x. 16.)

Shall we deny the unity of this one *flock?* "They washed their garments and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. THEREFORE are they before the Throne," &c. Can there be a more important word than this "THEREFORE"?

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ADVERTISEMENT.

This Pamphlet has been for some years in circulation. It is now reprinted in a somewhat enlarged form. I had intended to add to it yet a little more; but circumstances have hindered: and I am unwilling longer to delay its re-publication.

B. W. N.

May, 1892.

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Moses, the Child of Faith.

THE simplicity and energy of faith which first marked the family of promise, when in the person of Abraham they were called into manifested separation from the rest of men, began early to wane. The histories of Isaac, of Jacob, and of Jacob's family, afford continuous examples of decay; until with Joseph in Egypt, the faith of Israel seemed finally to expire. Year after year rolled on without one solitary instance of faith being recorded in Abraham's once blessed family. It seemed as though their sun had set in darkness for ever.

But the hour of extremity amongst God's people is that in which He is pleased chiefly to show that He is God—able if needful, "to quicken the dead, and to call the things that are not, as though they were." In an obscure household of Levi, a child was born, of whom it is written, that he was a "goodly" (טוֹב—*αστειος*) child. Yet, no doubt, there had before been born in Israel children no less goodly and fair, who had nevertheless been given up to death under the King's commandment. However much their parents' hearts might have yearned

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over them, or writhed in bitter agony, yet none had had faith to commit themselves to the care of God, and to dare disobedience to the word of Pharaoh. Destruction therefore pursued its course, and the name of Israel seemed likely to perish from the earth, when, suddenly, two unknown individuals in Levi determined to trust in the God of their fathers, to hide their child, and to disobey the King. Their act of faith was like themselves, secret and unknown, but the power of God was in it. It virtually commenced a new era in the history of Israel and the earth, the results whereof shall have no end.

The parents of Moses had, in the fact of their own personal anguish, one ground on which to seek the mercies of Him who ever counts the hairs of the head of His people, and puts all their tears into His bottle. But neither their affection to their child, nor their recognition of the pity and loving-kindness with which God regarded them in their affliction, were the real motives of their deed. They remembered Israel. They remembered the promises made to Abraham and to his Seed. How could that Seed be born, how could Shiloh come to whom "the gathering of the peoples shall be," if the designs of Pharaoh were accomplished and the males of Israel destroyed? They remembered the destinies of Israel, and therefore cast themselves on the faithfulness and power of God. Never, I suppose, was a fair and goodly child born to any

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"who were of faith" in Israel, without its reminding them of the long-promised Seed who should deliver.

The faith of Moses' parents was genuine, and God intended abundantly to honour it; nevertheless on that very account it was the more severely tried. Faith must not always expect to find every difficulty vanish instantly from its path, or think that visible miracles will be wrought on its behalf. In days of weakness and general failure, the operations of the hand of God are more peculiarly wont to be slow and to be secret. Accordingly, no manifested miracle was wrought on behalf of the parents of Moses. They were thrown entirely upon their own resources for preserving their child by hiding him; and after a very little time, those resources failed, and they were able to hide him no longer. Nevertheless, they still trusted in God, even though obliged to relinquish their child altogether. A little ark was made; the child was placed therein; the parental hand ceased to cherish, and Moses abandoned on the river of Egypt, was committed wholly to the care of God—his sister only remaining to watch what the end should be. Thus their faith was tried to the very uttermost—tried, as it were, in the furnace. They were called on to behold their child placed in the very jaws of death.

Nor was any apparent miracle even now wrought for his deliverance. The daughter of Pharaoh had

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doubtless many a time before come to the river's side, and it seemed nothing wonderful that she should come then; nor was it strange that a perishing infant's cry should move her heart to pity. It appeared nothing wonderful that a Hebrew girl should happen to be nigh, and be willing to seek a Hebrew nurse for one whom all probability pointed out as a Hebrew child. All this seemed nothing wonderful; but God's almighty hand was in it, as the parents of Moses recognised when the child, almost before they had time to weep over their sorrow, was restored to their bosom again—given back out of the power of death. No outward miracle was needed to assure them that this had been the work of God's hand. They had trusted in Him, and had proved that it is not in vain to hope in the living God. Their hearts and their consciences testified that God had acted, and acted *for* them.

Yet the child Moses thus "drawn out of" destruction (the name means "drawn out of") was brought back to the dwelling of his parents, rather as a loan from the Lord, than as one whom they were to retain and use as their own. The Lord had rescued him for Himself, and was intending to use him for His own purposes. Probably his parents recognised this; otherwise their hearts must again have trembled when (the years of infant nourishment having passed) their child was once more taken from them, not indeed to be

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again abandoned on the waters, but to be placed in more terrible circumstances of moral peril—the splendour and corruption of Pharaoh's court. There seemed more danger to him then than to a lamb sent among lions, or to a dove given up to be nurtured with vultures, though the danger was moral. But He by whom Moses had been "drawn out of" the waters was able to draw him out of this danger too.

The heart of Moses was watched over by God. Accordingly, the faith that had been manifested in his parents was found to dwell even more abundantly in him. Although learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians—mighty in word and in deeds—called also the son of Pharaoh's daughter, with all the treasures and honours of Egypt within his grasp; yet when he saw that God, and God's blessings, were not with Pharaoh nor with Egypt, but with another people—a people, poor, despised, afflicted, and oppressed—he hesitated not in his selection. In faith he renounced all that Egypt could give, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." It was true, indeed, that God's own special providence had placed him in Pharaoh's court, and bestowed on him its greatness. He had not earned that greatness by sin or by compromise; it had been the gift of God. Why, then, should he contravene the purposes of God,—why throw away blessings

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so marvellously given? Why should he not remain where Providence had set him, and thence use the advantages which his position gave to aid and benefit God's people? Such might have been the pleadings of nature; but Moses was "of faith," and knew that providence is *in itself* no guide for faith. He knew that faith may find one of its chief exercises in resigning blessings that God's own providence may have given. He knew that the unregenerate strength of the Pharaoh of Egypt was an ill source whence to help the Israel of God. He knew that if we seek really to cast in our lot with God's people, it behoves us to share their sorrows, and not to be ourselves in some quiet habitation on the shore, whilst they are toiling in deep waters, and struggling with the storm.

To value God's people because they are His people; to love and to serve them, however weak, despised, or chastened, is a fruit of faith peculiarly acceptable to Him who loves them with a love stronger than death, which many waters cannot quench, and who has put His own great name upon them. The greater the circumstance of sorrow or of degradation into which the people of God may have sunk, the more precious this opportunity of service becomes. When all that is goodly and attractive naturally rests with the world, and when little is found with the children of the Kingdom save that which offends our natural, and perhaps

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our spiritual tastes, when the loss of natural associations seems compensated by no corresponding gain of spiritual fellowship, faith only can acquiesce in such circumstances, and be content to lose its life in this world, sharing "the affliction and patience of the kingdom in Jesus." Such was the faith of Moses. He chose "the reproach of Christ." He chose "to suffer affliction with the people of God."

But how terrible was the trial of his faith! When first he resolved on quitting the house of Pharaoh and resigning the honours and glories of Egypt, he expected that his brethren would understand his motives, and appreciate the sacrifice he had made. Consciousness of integrity—consciousness of having truly resigned all for the Lord's sake—a sense of the value of God's people, and an appreciation of their high destiny,—made his heart glow with glad anticipation. "He supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them." (Acts viii. 25.) He expected to receive from them not merely the salutation of affection, but to be hailed with that deeper welcome of soul which is found where hearts are conscious of being associated together under God, for the everlasting interests of His people and His truth. He supposed they would have understood his mission, but they understood not. Instead of sympathy and encouragement, he found only contempt and hatred. They thrust

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him from them, saying, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?"

Who can tell the bitterness of scorn when received under such circumstances? He had forsaken for their sake the very height of earthly glory; he had grieved the heart of her who had cherished him with a mother's care, and had apparently repaid her love with base ingratitude; he had shed the blood of Egypt and thereby jeopardised his own, hoping, as a return, to find the sympathies, and confidence, and co-operation of God's people. But they rejected him with contumely and disdain. Hated by Egypt; deserted by Israel: he stood emphatically alone. By slaying the Egyptian he sought to set Israel in irreconcilable hostility against Egypt, because it was the proper place of God's people to confront God's enemies. But Israel had none of his faith. They refused to be thus brought into conflict, and left him alone to meet the danger which *their* interests and *their* welfare had caused him to incur.

If natural affection merely, or natural impulse had been the spring of his conduct, his heart would now have given way. But he had not acted from nature, he had acted in faith; and his faith (for it was from God) did not fail. It was no doubt open to him to return to the circumstances he had quitted. He might have humbled himself before Pharaoh, and sought forgiveness and restoration from his hand. He might again

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have been called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. But he chose none of these things. How could he confess as evil a deed that he had deliberately done in faith towards the God of Israel? He determined therefore still to continue unreconciled to Pharaoh, and therefore to remain still in danger of pursuit and punishment, rather than retrace one step that he had taken. Accordingly he fled into the wilderness—a wilderness near to Egypt, where the search of the king might easily have discovered him. He would not seek a distant refuge, lest he should be far away from the land where Israel was: he determined therefore to fly into the neighbouring wilderness, and there to trust God for his preservation. "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible."

Desolate therefore as to the past, and so far as appearances went, hopeless as to the future, Moses, the child of faith, directed his solitary steps into the desert; hated by Egypt; scorned by Israel; with God only for his refuge. Yet however seemingly dishonoured, was there ever an hour in all his history, when Moses stood in a place more truly honourable in the sight of God? Was he not even at that moment of deepest discouragement and sorrow, when every feeling of his soul had been harrowed to the quick,—was he not honoured to be a type (though, indeed, an imperfect type) of Him who came into the world, and

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the world knew Him not, "who came unto His own, and His own received Him not"? Was he not permitted to foreshadow the rejection of Him "whom men have despised; whom the nation hath abhorred"; and so in his measure to taste of a cup which afterwards the Holy One of Israel drank to the full? This was his real, though at that time, unappreciated honour. Nevertheless no outward miracle was wrought on his behalf; no habitation worthy of his true dignity was prepared in compensation for the loss of that which he had resigned. For forty long years he who was destined to be King in Jeshurun, the Captain of the host of the Lord, the terror of Egypt, dwelt as a forgotten outcast in the wilderness, occupied merely with a family and a flock—a Gentile family and a Gentile flock—in this again foreshadowing One greater than himself. Christ, scorned by Egypt, rejected by Israel, is still by His Spirit occupied in the earth. But where? At present He dwells neither with Israel, nor with Egypt. It is in separation from both that He feeds His flock, as in a wilderness. There He finds the sphere of His occupation, and the subjects of His affections in a family and in a flock—a Gentile family, a Gentile flock. He seeks not at present to put forth His power either to subvert Egypt, or to control Israel, though destined to be known as the Lord of all; at present He submits to be rejected by both, and feeds in the wilderness the flock which He

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hath purchased by His own Blood; and that flock is at present specifically Gentile, whilst the vail rests upon Israel's heart. But it could not be that the spirit of Moses, however acquiescent in the appointment of God's will, however thankful for mercies and preservation,—it could not be that he should feel satisfied with circumstances in which every hope which he had cherished respecting Israel, and Canaan, and the triumphs of God's people, seemed frustrated for ever. How could God's Truth triumph if its energies were shut up in a wilderness, and Egypt were allowed to strengthen herself, and Israel were crushed or corrupted? How could he feel satisfied with circumstances which were circumstances rendered needful by others' evil, and were not the circumstances for which he was designed as Israel's deliverer, and as Israel's head? Was he what he was—had he experienced all that he had experienced, merely to abide in the wilderness, and to feed a flock? Not, indeed, that he was unthankful for the mercies given; he fully expressed his sense of these mercies when he named his child Eliezer, "for God," said he, "hath delivered me from the sword of Pharaoh." He owned and thankfully recorded his sense of that wondrous preservation—wondrous when we remember that Pharaoh was so nigh, and the enmity of the Egyptians so great. He thanked God for his preservation; yet still he named his other child Gershom, "a stranger there." It was

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the expression of his own feelings of strangership; he felt the wilderness strange; the occupation strange; the narrowed circle of interests strange; the name therefore expressed the sorrow of his tried and exercised heart, yet still it was no expression of fretfulness; no word of unbelieving complaint: he did not say, "a stranger here," but "a stranger there." It was an expression of present feeling, but it was also an expression of faith. The word "*there*" was one that went beyond and out of the circumstances then present around him, and spoke of them all as past. It refused to know the strangership and its griefs as abiding; it spoke as if the end of the path of sorrow had been reached; as if the night had passed, and the dawn of the morning appeared; as if the land of trial had been quitted for ever, and he looked back on it, and said, "a stranger *there*."

And can any who have the spirit of Christ, and who know what the prospects are of the nations, and of Israel, and of Israel's King; who know that the hour of visitation is drawing nigh, when Egypt shall finally fall, and the people of God be delivered, and Truth be exalted, and all nations be gathered to the fold of Him who now feedeth His few sheep in the wilderness,—can any one who anticipates these things, fail to understand the feelings of Moses, or hesitate to say, "a stranger there"? Is there no present sense of the wilderness and of the sorrows of rejection? Had St.

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Paul no sense of it when he said, that instead of reigning according to the supremacy which Truth ought to give, he was regarded as the filth and offscouring of all things? Are there no bright anticipations of that hour when rejection shall cease; when Truth shall be exalted in the earth; when the wilderness shall be left for ever, and triumph remain? It is the expectation of such things that enables us also to say, "a stranger *there*."

And here, again, observe the length of the trial of Moses' faith. Forty years passed on without one manifested indication that God either remembered Israel, or sympathised with His rejected exiled servant. Yet He had forgotten neither; only the time had not yet come for the plans of His own wisdom to be matured. His hand had long been turned judicially on Egypt and its King, and had sent on them a prosperity out of which they had nourished their pride, and paved their way to ruin. They were being raised to the very pinnacle of greatness, but they were raised *judicially*. "Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show My power in thee, and that My name might be declared throughout all the earth." Here, then, was one reason for delay —the pride of Egypt had not yet fully blossomed. Israel tôo (because of that blindness of heart which had rejected Moses and failed to appreciate his zeal and self-renunciation) had earned for them-

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selves chastisement, and forty years of suffering were added to the record of their misery. Moses also must have learned many a lesson in the wilderness. Patience was having with him her perfect work. The service for which he was destined required humility, meekness, and endurance, and who can question that when called at last to take the leadership of Israel, his well-disciplined soul (for he was the meekest of men) owed many a lesson to the instructions of the wilderness?

But when forty years had passed, the appointed time was come, and God suddenly appeared—appeared in a burning bush. What more destructible than a bush; what so likely to be devoured by the consuming flame? What so unlikely as a bush in a wilderness to be the habitation of Him whom the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain? Yet the Holy One of Israel was really there. He had stooped from the mansions of His glory, had come down into a wilderness, and made weakness the Tabernacle of His strength. How will the redeemed in the ages to come apprehend the fitness of this early emblem, and appreciate the humiliation of the Holy One, and understand in how many ways He has connected His glory with human weakness, not to destroy, but to preserve, and trace back all their blessings to the "good will of Him who dwelt in the bush!"

In accordance with the intimation thus symbolically given, it pleased God, in His first interview

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with Moses, immediately to connect His own almighty strength with weakness; for the shepherd rod of Moses was suddenly transformed into the rod of power—a rod that smote Egypt with plagues, and divided the waters of the deep, and caused streams to flow in the desert. The despised and forgotten Shepherd of the wilderness was suddenly clothed with strength, and sent back as the Deliverer of God's people, to lead them out with signs and wonders, with a mighty hand and outstretched arm.

And does the remembrance of these things awaken no corresponding expectations now? Were not the circumstances of that hour intended to foreshadow things yet to be? Will not the family of faith that now sojourns in the wilderness, sorrowfully conscious of the possession of truth at present despised and frustrated, though finally to be paramount over all nations—will not this family be soon called from its hiding-place, and from its lowly occupations, and be manifested in association with Him who shall appear as the Deliverer of Israel, and "the King of nations"; when "the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away"? Then, again, the song of deliverance shall be sung (Rev. xv. 3)—sung with joy truer and more lasting, because never again to be dissipated by the power of evil—"Thou, O Lord, hast led forth the people

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whom thou hast redeemed; thou hast guided them by Thy strength into Thy holy habitation." Then the ways of God in redemption shall be looked for no longer in a wilderness, there hidden with the despised and well-nigh forgotten family of faith, but the results of redemption and of the supremacy of Truth shall be displayed in new arrangements of glory in Heaven above, and in the earth beneath, until at last all nations shall be blessed, and all creation rejoice, and everything that the eye beholdeth shall give thanks for ever. Such are the expectations of those who now sigh in the wilderness, and who say (though perhaps in feeble faith) "STRANGERS THERE."

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§ II.

WE have seen the vigour of the faith of Moses when (forsaking the honours and pleasures of the royal house of Egypt, where Pharaoh's daughter had cherished him as her own child) he deliberately abandoned all the advantages which by the gracious providence of God had been gathered around him, and daring the wrath of the King, cast in his lot with the despised and down-trodden people of God, "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward."

It was a marvellous act of faith; the more so because it was spontaneous. There was no outward call from God: no voice from Heaven: no vision: no miracle. All around him was darkness. Not a heart, or a tongue favoured him; and even God seemed to regard him not. The act of his faith was, as to any present results, fruitless. The darkness that brooded over Israel departed not. He wrought no deliverance. Although he had sacrificed all that was dear to him in Egypt, and had placed his own life in jeopardy, yet no results such as he had hoped for followed. The eye of Israel saw not; their ear heard not; their groan continued. Moses stood unbefriended and alone. Nevertheless, his faith retained its steadfastness.

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He might, no doubt, have returned to the King, and made confession, and have been forgiven. But he would not. Egypt was no resting place for him. Yet *Israel* were in Egypt; therefore, lest he should place himself in too great separation from them, he would not seek a refuge beyond the reach of Pharaoh's power, but retired into the not distant desert, and there committed himself to the care of God. Forty years he tarried in the wilderness, a sojourner and a shepherd. Yet he looked not on the place of his refuge as the place of his rest. The name of his child, as we have seen, sufficiently indicated the current of his inward feeling, for he called him Gershom—"a stranger there."

Nevertheless, the time of the sojourn of Moses in the wilderness was not one in which his spiritual strength increased. On the contrary, it evidently became enfeebled. When we remember the early vigour of his faith in circumstances where there was nothing to encourage or to cheer, we feel it difficult to recognise that it was the same Moses who, when called into the immediate presence of God, to hear His voice, and to receive from God's own lips, a commission to go and to deliver Israel, refused. It seemed as if all his love to Israel had vanished, and as if all his confidence in the power and promises and faithfulness of God had departed; for when brought into the visible presence of God and commanded by God's own lips to go and deliver Israel, he refused the com-

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mission and declined to obey. Moses said, "O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses."

Justly indeed was His anger kindled, for He had not only pleaded with Moses, and instructed and encouraged him, but He had also manifested to him by miracle the wonders of His almighty power. His presence in the bush was a miracle. The fire burned fiercely, yet the bush was not consumed. What more devouring than fire; what more consumable than a bush? Yet the fire burned in its fierceness, and the bush perished not—a token to Moses, and a token to us, that the God of all holiness and glory, He who is "a consuming fire," can bring Himself into the closest association with consumable weakness, and yet cause that the weakness should not only not perish, but that it should be brought into abiding association with holiness and with glory. It is a truth which the redeemed have daily cause to apprehend. They are monuments in time, and soon will be monuments in eternity of "the good-will of Him who dwelt in the bush."

But this was not the only miracle. When, in his earlier days, Moses had sought to be the deliverer of Israel, he little knew all that was needed to carry out that service. He had considered the strength of Egypt, but that was only one form of the might of the enemy. The power of Pharaoh might be encountered and overthrown, but

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Pharaoh's empire was but *one* sphere of the development of Satan's power. Moses, therefore, needed to be taught another lesson. At the command of God, he cast his rod upon the ground, and it became a serpent, and "Moses fled from before it." There he beheld the real character of the power with which he had to conflict. How truly he realised this afterwards! How truly have all the servants of God, each in their various measures, proved it in every age! Our conflict is not with flesh and blood, but with the serpent in all the manifold forms of his secret and subtle, or, else, manifested and terrifying power. Satan is "the deceiver of the nations" (Rev. xx. 3). Satan is the world-wide orderer, former, and controller (*κοσμοκρατωρ*) of the darkness of this age of ruin. (See Eph. vi.) Moses fled from the presence of the serpent. But when, at the command of God, he turned and stretched forth his hand and grasped it, the vitality departed; the terror ceased; the power of the enemy was gone, and a rod of strength was retained in his hand. Such, through grace, shall be the final end of the conflicts of all God's servants. The struggle may be long: the conflict fierce: yet triumph shall come at last. "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." And whilst we wait for that final hour of victory, triumphs (less complete indeed, but still triumphs) may be granted even now. The shield of faith—faith in God's covenant mercies

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through the redemption that is in Christ, "is able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one." "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." In this miracle, therefore, Moses was taught not only the nature of the power which he had to confront, but he learned also that God was about to endue him with a strength sufficient to cope with all that was against him. And what was true of Moses is measurably true of all God's servants who are called (each in various manners and degrees) to meet and conflict with His and their enemy. They have need to be acquainted not only with the power that is *with* them; but also with the power that is *against* them. If they despise, or are ignorant of the latter (and often they are ignorant), they will proportionally fail in valuing the former. God's strength, which is with us, is prized just in proportion as we estimate the greatness of the power that is arrayed against us.

But there was yet another lesson that Moses had to learn. Of the weakness and powerlessness of his own unaided hand, and of its inability, if unstrengthened, to conflict with the serpent-power of Satan he was, no doubt, conscious. But weakness is in itself no sin. Mere weakness God can own, befriend, and bless. But now, another lesson was to be taught. Moses was commanded to put his

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hand into his bosom, and "when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous as snow." Our weakness is not merely weakness: it is sinful weakness—weakness that deserves to be smitten by a plague whereby the disease and corruption that lurks within us is made manifest. But the same power that is able to smite, is able also to deliver. Moses, by God's commandment, placed again his hand within his bosom, and when he drew it out, it was clean. All trace of the leprosy was gone. Sin, as well as weakness, was in Moses: sin, as well as weakness, was in Israel. Israel needed not only strength: they needed pardon. Criminality needs mercy—mercy that rejoices against judgment. This Moses, through a lengthened pilgrimage, was about to learn in a way and to an extent that he little contemplated then: but subsequently, when he uttered that prayer of which the ninetieth Psalm is the record, he had learned in part the lesson; and yet more perfectly will he have learned it, when in association with all those who shall rise in the first resurrection he shall stand in glory on the sea of glass mingled with fire, and there again sing his own prophetic song, and also the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, O King of nations" (Rev. xv.). He was to see leprosy in himself, and leprosy in Israel; but he was also to learn and to prove the faithfulness and lovingkindness of God. Though,

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at one moment he had to say, "We are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled; thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance;" yet he also said, in the confidence of future hope, "Return, O Lord, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." Here was the utterance of a heart that had learned to understand the sign of the hand smitten, and of the hand restored. The servants of God have not only to meet the strength and terrors of external evil, they have also to deal with the deadly, tainting, corroding power of evil in others, and in themselves. The very light which they need, and which their souls crave, often makes manifest when it comes, the depth of the darkness that reigns in and around them. What if there were not One who can say, "I am the Lord that healeth thee"? What if He did not teach us to say, "We are more than conquerors through Him that loveth us"? But this He *does* teach us to say. His grace will at last bring healing in all fulness to our

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leprous selves. Thus we prove the good will of Him who dwelt in the bush: and "on the sea of glass" we shall praise Him for that "good will" worthily.

But to return. The pertinacious reluctance of Moses to accept the commission of God, evidenced (as I have already said) that the early energy of his faith had, during his sojourn in the wilderness, become enfeebled. If, when surrounded by all the potency of systematised and energetic evil, we are enabled (as Moses in Pharaoh's house was) to view such evil in the light of God and of His Truth; if our hearts can say that our sympathies are *with* God, and *against* all the habits of thought, feeling, and action, that prevail around, there will, in that case, be found in us a strength and vigour that will enable us to take and to keep, a place of soldiership as those who are girded, harnessed and ready for the conflict. Soldiers whilst actively warring in an enemy's land have commonly a courage and an energy that is lacking to those who find themselves afar off from the foe, and dwelling in security and peace. Inactivity engenders listlessness. When the sword of the Spirit ceases to be drawn in resistance, or in aggression, strength, and energy will surely decay. Such, doubtless, was the experience of Moses. In Pharaoh's house he was daily as one who girded on his armour. The enemy was near: watchfulness and resistance were momentarily needed. Where acquiescence is impossible, there must be unceas-

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ing conflict: there can never be peace. But in the retirement of the wilderness it was otherwise. The godless pomp, and might, and glory, and energy of Egypt were not there to dazzle, delude, and oppress. The principles and position of Moses as the servant of God no longer stood in antagonistic contrast with the principles and position of those around him. The daily conflict to which he had been so long habituated was suspended. What wonder, then, if he should become as one ungirded? What wonder if his armour should be laid aside, and at last forgotten? The evil of Egypt, indeed, had not changed. The relation of God, and of God's people and truth thereunto, had not changed. But the personal position of Moses in respect of it had changed. That which had been viewed by him as present was now contemplated as distant. Other interests and occupations had intervened; and the strength and vividness of former apprehensions had become enfeebled.

Yet there was no necessity for its being so. The retirement of Moses was not self-chosen. It was not the result of disobedience or of self-will. In that case, it might have been chastened by a loss of strength. He had retired not as a rebel, but as a servant of God, despised and rejected for God's sake. He retired into an asylum graciously provided for him by God. God gave him the shelter of Jethro's house: God gave him the flock to feed: God formed for him a circle of family

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affections and joys. Daily cause for thankfulness was supplied to him by these mercies: and doubtless he was thankful. Such mercies need not have enfeebled him. In the midst of them Moses might have remembered God's purposes respecting Egypt and respecting Israel, so as for the energy of his faith to have remained unchanged. But it was otherwise. There was for the time an enfeeblement of his faith, not a strengthening.

But temporary enfeeblement may through God's mercy lead into paths of renovated and wiser energy. Vigour, courage, and promptitude are valuable elements of character, but they are not the only qualifications that God looks for in His servants. The vigour of an undisciplined and unchastened heart profits little. God in judging our actions considers not merely the action and its motives, He considers also the manner and the temper in which it is performed. Right deeds may, by concomitant circumstances, be grievously marred. Liberality may be marred in its development by harshness: faithfulness by rudeness: truthful instruction by the absence of gentleness and wise compassion. Few instructors are able to say what the Apostle said, "I was gentle among you even as a nurse cherisheth her children." The energies of nature may so mingle themselves with those of grace as to give to true testimonies the characteristics of Jehu rather than of Christ. A sphere such as that which Moses occupied in Pha-

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raoh's house, where he was daily engaged in conflict with the evil of others, is not always the best school for self-knowledge and meekness. A heart occupied in watching the ways of others may become indisposed to watch its own: and is wont to judge of its condition rather by measuring its distance from others' evil than by estimating its own shortcomings as to good. In that case there will be danger of self-complacency and pride being found in result; and there will be no deep self-knowledge. There may be much energy, but it will be self-confident. The hand may be willing to wield the rod of power, but it will be unconscious of its own weakness and innate leprosy, and fail in subjection to the methods of God in dealing with the evil with which it has to cope. Moses was, no doubt, true in heart to God, and energetic in faith when he left Egypt, but he had yet many an humbling lesson to learn. It needed that one who was about to lead a stiff-necked and rebelling people, whose "sinew was iron, and their brow brass," into the presence of God's holiness as revealed at Sinai—it was needful that such an one should be "the meekest of men." Accordingly, Moses became finally the meekest of men. The lessons that he learned during his forty years' banishment in the wilderness no doubt greatly tended to chasten and subdue his spirit. His lengthened period of sojourn in the wilderness (a period so utterly contrasted with all that he had

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before known in the greatness of Pharaoh's house) no doubt greatly tended to discipline him and prepare him for the work to which he was about to be called—a work which unchastened energy was not suited to perform; yet among the incidents of the wilderness there were none perhaps to which Moses looked back with greater wonder and humiliation than to those which marked the conclusion of his wilderness-sojourn. In after years he must have marvelled greatly at the spiritual decrepitude into which he had unconsciously fallen, when he resisted God, and thrust from him the honour which God, in favour and love, had tendered him. Yet the lesson of humiliation which he learned thereby was, doubtless, a needed one, if he was really to be made strong for the service of God, for no one who is not humble can truly be strengthened with the strength of God.

Again, nothing is more important to God's servants than the habitual maintenance in their souls of a lively apprehension of the ends towards which God is working in the earth, and of the means which He is employing in order to effectuate those ends. Moses, whilst in Pharaoh's house, had been very conscious of the vastness of the blessings that centred in Israel as the chosen and separated people of the Lord. He knew that through them the uncircumcised strength of earth was finally to fall, and that through Abraham's "seed"—one who was to spring out of Israel—all nations were

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to be blessed. He knew, too, that the hour of Israel's extrication from Egypt and their entrance on the Land of their inheritance was near, because the four hundred years during which God had said they should sojourn in Egypt had well nigh expired. (See Genesis xv. 13.) The strength of his conviction as to these, and like things, had caused him to break every tie that bound him to Egypt, and to cast in his lot with Israel. A few more years passed away. Moses sojourned in the wilderness, and a son was born to him there. We might have supposed that Moses would have hastened to give to that child the token of identification with Israel—God's people. But he did not. When the forty years of his sojourn in the wilderness terminated, one, if not both sons, remained still uncircumcised. God had said unto Abraham, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant, therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised. . . . . And the uncircumcised man child . . . . shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant." (Gen. xvii.

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7—14.) Thus the covenant which gave to Israel their land, and every other blessing which the promises given to Abraham and to Christ his seed secured, were sealed by the sign of circumcision. Moses understood it as indicating that Israel were a *manifestly* separated people, separated from all other peoples, and separated unto God, that they might know Him, serve Him, and be the instruments of working out His purposes in the earth. Whilst Moses dwelt in Egypt there was, probably, nothing more habitually present to his heart than the conviction of the distinctive blessedness of those who stood under the Abrahamic covenant of promise. Circumcision was the visible sign of connection therewith; and Moses whilst in Pharaoh's house would as soon of thought of despising the covenant itself, as of despising the appointed sign of association with it. Yet in the wilderness Moses neglected to circumcise his child. How, then, must the consciousness of Israel's high and separate calling and hope in their future triumphs, and the expectation of all their promised blessings—the very thoughts that had prompted Moses to do what he did when he slew the Egyptian—how must the apprehension of all these things have faded in his soul whilst he tarried in the wilderness! There is a comforting power in truth; and there is a separative power in truth. When the *comforting* is disjoined from the *separative* power it will soon be found that our faith will lack right comprehen-

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siveness and vigour; and that our influence on others is not such as to lead them into paths that beseem the people of God. The influence of Moses should have so borne on Zipporah and her children as to bring them into a right relation of thought, feeling, and action, towards Israel, and the God of Israel, and to all who were not in covenant relation with the God of Israel. But it was far otherwise. God, therefore, had a controversy with His servant; and His hand was stretched out against him. "And it came to pass, by the way in the inn, that the Lord met him, and sought to kill him," when Zipporah, recognising the cause, circumcised, though with reluctant hand and murmuring lips, her son; and so the impending stroke was stayed. Afterward, no doubt, Moses looked back upon this scene and received the lesson—a humbling lesson, but one which conduced to his becoming the meekest of men.

And does it teach *us* nothing? "The things written afore-time were written for our learning." The lesson is intended as much, or more for us than for Moses. We have now greater and fuller light than he. Things signified in shadows to him are by us known in substance. The day of visitation on Egypt which he expected, great as were its results, was but a partial and imperfect foreshadowing of that day of fiery indignation and judgment which we expect when heaven and earth shall be shaken.

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Do we habitually see the things around us in the light of that coming day? Do we view Israel, and the nations, and the servants of God, in the place that they will respectively occupy when the iniquity now rising around us shall have come to the full? Do we by faith realise the coming judgments, and see the glory that is beyond? Or have these things faded and passed away from the apprehensions of our souls, leaving us in a state of doubtful and qualified separation?

Since the time when Israel finally rejected Christ, God (postponing the time of universal blessing which cannot be till Israel shall "convert and be healed") has by His servants fed His flock in secret places as in the midst of a moral wilderness, permitting the world's Egyptian glory to advance, and allowing Israel to wander into further distance from Him. "The family" and "the flock" are the two names which more especially indicate the present relations of the true people of God to God and to one another—relations justly prized by those who know that they need love, concord, rest and peace. But there is always a tendency in hearts constituted like ours to make that which is rightly precious, absorbing: and in that case the circle of our thoughts will become narrow and exclusive, and our souls will lack the right comprehensiveness of faith, hope, and knowledge. Concord, rest, and peace within the fold of our Shepherd may become so exclusively the object of our heart's desire that we may shrink

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from the words, "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay, but rather division." (Luke xii. 51.) "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." (Matt. x. 34.) "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?" (Luke xii. 49.) When we have been thinking of Jesus as the Lamb provided by God—the Lamb led to the slaughter, wounded for the transgressions, and bruised for the iniquities of His people—when we have been thinking of the mercy towards a lost world, indicated by the testimony now being given to the saving efficacy of His blood, have we never felt tempted to put away from ourselves the thought of the day of *the Lamb's wrath*, —when He shall come forth as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who shall cry, yea roar, and prevail against His enemies? Yet He who is the Lamb is also the Lion. He who is to His people Melchisedek, the King of righteousness and of peace, is also that "King of kings, and Lord of lords" who shall come forth to tread the winepress of the fury and wrath of Almighty God. The sweetness of the knowledge of His grace must be tempered by the knowledge of His holiness and of His judgments, else "the salt of the covenant" of our God will be lacking to our character, and testimonies, and ways; and where salt is lacking, elements of corruption will be found working.

There was no one who preached the Gospel of the

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grace of God more earnestly than Paul, and there was no one who watched over the sheep of Christ with more tender care—being "gentle among them even as a nurse cherisheth her children." Yet in describing the subjects of his testimony we find him saying, "I testify before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, His appearing and His kingdom"*—words which show that the Apostle embodied in his testimonies all that the Prophets had spoken concerning the evil to be developed in the latter days, and the judgments that are to fall thereon, as well as the glory that is to follow. There was no one who realised more deeply than the Apostle John, the love, and mercy, and grace which the concluding chapters of his Gospel reveal. Truly he was ever as one who leaned on the bosom of His Lord; yet it was John who in the Revelation was caused to eat the bitter book of prophecy, and was sent like another Jeremiah to testify "against [επι] many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." The Lord Jesus Himself was anointed to preach "the acceptable year of the Lord AND the day of judgment of our God": His servants have a like message.

Yet how determined has been the resistance to

* Διαμαρτυρομαι ενωπιον του Θεου και χριστου Ιησου του μελλοντος κρινειν ζωντας και νεκρους την επιφανειον αυτου και την βασιλειαν αυτου. (2 Tim. iv.) Such is the reading of this passage according to the most ancient authorities. (See Tregelles.)

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those testimonies which call upon the people of God to renounce absorption in their own present interests and comforts, and to consider in the light of God's Word "the things that must shortly come to pass!" Like Zipporah, when she circumcised her son, we fret, murmur, and hesitate; yet nothing can be more certain than that all who advance with God, will, like Zipporah, be obliged to yield at last. The family and the flock of God are called upon to awaken from the slumber that has overtaken them in their quiet resting-places; for the last great struggle with the powers of darkness is at hand, and the bleating of the sheep-folds is not the sound that must detain those who go forth to do battle with the foes of the God of Israel. (See Judges v. 16.) As God sought to smite Moses, so His hand will surely be stretched out against those who cleave so exclusively to the rest and occupations of the fold as to refuse to recognise the place which the servants of Christ, as the circumcised host of the Lord, are called to occupy in the now commencing conflict. Shall Jesus say to us in vain, "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to declare unto you these things [these quick, piercing, separating truths] in the Churches"? Shall we say, These truths are sharp and circumcising, and refuse them? Or shall we, like Zipporah, yield?

We shall not deem it a sorrow to be numbered among the circumcised when the time comes for "the circumcision made without hands" to be mani-

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fested in all the completeness of its results. The means which God has employed to bring the redeemed into a circumcised condition of being above the heavens, is the death and resurrection of the Holy One. In virtue of their legal oneness with Him they have, as represented by Him, passed through judicial death when He, their substitute, died; and emerging from it when He rose, they have, in virtue of the same legal oneness, passed into a new condition of being above the Heavens, where, as still represented by Him, they are "blessed with all spiritual blessing" in Him—their life being hid with Him in God.

In Christ the redeemed are separated from the flesh and separated unto God for ever, in the glory of a new creation where there is nothing according to the flesh (*κατα σαρκα*) but where all is according to the Spirit (*κατα πνευμα*). The manifestation of the reality and *completeness* of this separation will be when the Lord shall return. Then in the redeemed "this corruptible shall put on incorruption;" and not a trace of the characteristics of this *first* creation shall remain. The time for bearing the image of the earthy Adam shall then have passed, and the time will have come to bear for ever the image of the Heavenly. When the hour shall come for us to meet the Lord in the air and to fall into the train of His glory, as the heavenly host of the God of Israel, that we may with Him confront the triumphant

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power of Satan in the earth and crush it — when that hour of triumph for the circumcised of the Lord shall have come, shall we not marvel when we look back upon the apathetic, listless indifference with which, whilst sojourning in the wilderness, we had contemplated the struggle between Israel and Egypt — Truth and Falsehood — God and Satan, as if we had no aspirations, or desires, or duties beyond the peaceful occupations of the family, and the rest of the fold? When there is listlessness as to the future triumph of truth there will be surely a disregard of its present conflicts. Habits that should characterise the circumcised of the Lord will be found wanting. We shall be chargeable with guilty association with things that are evil, and guilty dissociation with other things that are good.

For present practical circumcision it is needful that we should clearly apprehend:

I. That which the Scripture has revealed respecting the character of that worse than Egyptian evil, secular and religious, that is, now advancing around us, and is soon to be matured.

II. The manner in which this evil shall be, by God's judgments, visited and crushed.

III. The position, not only of separation, but of *antagonism* and *militancy*, which God expects His servants to occupy in relation to that evil.

Prophetic truth is intended to prepare for this militancy. If that truth be neglected, the place

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of required militancy will not be held; and the Church will be found in the condition of the family of Moses when they quitted the wilderness —*uncircumcised.* Are we not *in this sense* uncircumcised now? Yet the Church has not ceased to be one with its risen Head; and the Spirit of the circumcised One dwells for ever in it.

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§ III.

THE stubborn resistance of Moses had yielded, and the will of Zipporah been subdued, and they were together advancing toward Egypt, when Aaron, by God's commandment, met them. "And Moses told Aaron all the words of the Lord who had sent him, and all the signs which he had commanded him." Thus comforted, confident and hopeful, because of the great commission wherewith they had been entrusted, they entered Egypt together, and met the assembled elders of Israel. "And Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people." It was an hour of joy and bright anticipation. Light had come in upon the long night of Israel's sorrow. The Lord their God had "taken them by the hand" to lead them out of the land of their bondage. The greatness of the mercy that was being vouchsafed was recognised. There was reverent thankfulness and joy. "The people believed, and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that He had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads, and worshipped." It was a scene that still foreshadows to faith that yet future hour, when the great Melchisedek of Israel, combining in His own Person the two offices of

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King and Priest (which Moses and Aaron typically bore) shall meet the again rescued Israel in the fulness of the mercies of applied redemption, and give to them such an estimate of the bitter past, and such a vivid apprehension of the blessed future as shall cause their hearts to glow with a thankfulness and praise that shall never again vanish. But the hour of their then present joy was soon to be overspread with clouds and darkness. Serpent-power was to rage against them; corroding leprosies were to break out amongst them. Yet at that moment these things were unsuspected. Moses himself knew not the character of the path they were about to tread. He little knew the results of that fiery Law of which he was about to become the minister. But the lesson soon began. Moses and Aaron appeared in the presence of Pharaoh and announced their message; but Pharaoh met it with fierce defiance. Instead of releasing Israel he grasped them with his iron hand, and made them to groan more deeply than they had ever groaned before. They appealed to his pity, but they appealed in vain. They quailed therefore; their faith gave way, and their hope vanished. They who had just before bowed their heads and thankfully worshipped, met Moses and Aaron and said, "The Lord look upon you, and judge; because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to

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slay us." Moses and Aaron were silent. *Their* faith seemed to be staggered also. "Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? Why is it thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all." The words both of Moses and of Israel seemed to savour of fretfulness and unbelief. The tokens of moral leprosy were not wanting.

But the Lord was patient and faithful. Accordingly, He strengthened His servant against Pharaoh until Pharaoh and Egypt succumbed. The plagues sent were no mere providential judgments like to the famine that drove Jacob and the Patriarchs into Egypt; they were direct inflictions from the hand of God, so that even Pharaoh's magicians were at last constrained to say, "This is the finger of God." And when these inflictions, after having been momentarily recognised, and submitted to, were subsequently rebelled against and defied, God manifested the presence of His glorious power, and Himself gave the stroke under which Pharaoh finally and for ever fell. The plagues admitted of repentance. They were precursive warnings of the great *final* blow; but the effects of *that* blow were irreversible, affording no room for repentance. Looked at merely as a narrative of the past, it is an awful history, intended to work in all who fear God a holy awe; but we have to remember

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that this past visitation, terrible as it is, is but the foreshadowment of a visitation far more fearful and extensive that is about to be, and of which the Book of Revelation is the record. The lessons taught by these typical foreshadowments can be learned only by acquaintance with those great realities that are to close the history of the Day of Man. The mission of Moses was but the manifest commencement of that prolonged and still continued conflict which God is carrying on with the Prince of the power of the air—the "Ruler of this world"—a conflict of which Israel and Jerusalem are the earthly centre. Does Christendom (I speak not of Israel) believe this? Christendom does *not* believe it. It has long closed its eyes to the future. Clearly and fully is the history of the last great Pharaoh of the earth written in the Word of God. But Christendom heeds it not. Its eye is darkened that it cannot see: its ear heavy that it cannot hear. They who fear God in the midst of Christendom have still to say, "Except the Lord of Hosts had left us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and made like unto Gomorrah."

But to return. When the Egyptians fell, Israel were sheltered. Their murmurings were silenced: light rose upon them, and they triumphed in the triumph of their God. "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing won-

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ders? . . . . Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation. . . . Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in: in the sanctuary, O Lord, which thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever." Such were their words of exulting triumph. A few days passed: they advanced into the wilderness: found at first no water, and then, waters that were bitter, and they murmured. "The people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink?" Again the leprosy recurred: again the patient goodness of the Lord was manifested. Their murmuring was checked by the provision of a healing power that made the bitter waters sweet; and proved that there was with them One competent to meet every need, and to deliver from every danger—One who could say, "I am the Lord, the healer of thee." There He made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there He proved them, and said, "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord, the healer of thee. And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and

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ten palm trees; and they encamped there by the waters."

Here was more than deliverance: it was deliverance into blessing. Food, shelter and rest beside springing waters were provided for them, and amongst them was One able and ready to protect them from every foe, to ward off every danger, and to supply every need. Proof of the mightiness of His power, and of His readiness to use it on their behalf, had been, in their recent history, abundantly supplied. They were found as in a furnace of fire: they had been delivered and brought into this plenitude of rest.

Yet in the recital of the proposed future blessings there occurred one word which, if they had understood its bearing, would have at once quenched their joy, and buried every hope. That word was IF. It made the promises *conditional*—conditional, not on that which should be supplied by God, but on something supplied by them. *If* they would be faithful to God, God would be faithful to them. It was a covenant of works. If a vail had not rested on their hearts, if they had looked on to the end of that which this "IF" involved they would have discovered the judgment and death that lay before them, and their souls, affrighted, would have shrunk back from the dread results. But blinded eyes saw not. Three times already, since Israel had quitted Egypt, their murmurings would have made them (if dealt with according to

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their due) subjects of curse instead of blessing. But "their minds were blinded." At Sinai, deliberately and formally they entered into a "bond" (χειρογραφον, Col. ii. 14), whereby they were constituted, if obedient in *all* things, heirs of everlasting blessing, but if in *one* thing disobedient, heirs of eternal curse. The covenant of *grace* which God had made with Abraham, and because of which they had been extricated from Egypt (a covenant under which God had undertaken to give and to perpetuate all that was needful to secure the final end of blessing)—that covenant they, in careless ignorance, cast to the winds, and as far as in *them* lay, abrogated it for ever. From that moment to the present, Israel stand before us as the ensample of the doom entailed on themselves by those who, being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own, refuse to submit themselves to the righteousness prepared by God in Another. "*By the obedience of ONE*"—the obedience of the Lord Jesus, and by that obedience alone can any be "constituted righteous." His obedience was a sacrificial obedience consummated in a sacrificial and atoning death—a death died by the Head of Israel—Israel's Lord, and Israel's God. Thoroughly had the soul of Moses learned to estimate these things when he stood by the side of the great Head of Israel on the holy mount, and spoke with Him of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Moses had

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indeed well proved what the power of the Serpent was, and what the leprosy of sin could effect both in himself and others: though he had proved also the mercies, loving kindness, and grace of God. He had himself died, stricken down under the holiness of the very Law of which he was the minister. Yet grace had rescued his body from Satan, buried it, raised it from the dead, and caused it on the holy mount to shine with glory like unto the glory of his Lord; thus attesting the truth of the words which the Apostle afterward wrote. "The covenant (*i.e.* the covenant of grace which God had made with Abraham) that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the Law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise." (Gal. iii. 17, 18.) Moses had thoroughly to learn this lesson that he might practically prove the difference between evil and good; weakness and strength; judgment and grace. Little did he think when he sang with Israel their song of triumph at the Red Sea, or when he rested with them at Meribah and Elim, or when from the height of Pisgah he viewed the Land of Israel's inheritance—little did he think that the next time of his seeing that Land (after centuries had rolled away) would be when he should be taken there to witness the wickedness and rebellion of his people in rejecting

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and crucifying their King and their God. Little did Moses know the history of Israel's sin, or the developments of iniquity which the Law (of which he was the minister) was destined to evoke. Nor, even now, is the measure of their iniquity filled. They have rejected the true Shepherd whom God sent in mercy: they will soon receive and welcome another false shepherd whom God will send in judgment. (See Zech. xi. 16.) "I have come," said the Lord Jesus, "in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive." This also it remains for Moses to contemplate more nearly than we, perhaps, are accustomed to believe. A day of darkness is at hand greater than any that has ever yet been known, and Moses will fearfully experience its power, but he will pass out of it into brighter and more exalted glory than any he has yet known, and will act, and serve, and minister in the day of Israel's glory and joy, "when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously." Marvellous have been, and marvellous will yet be, in earth as well as Heaven, the experiences of Moses, the Child of Faith.

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§ IV.

WE can scarcely think of Moses and Elijah standing by the side of the Lord Jesus on the holy mount, without being reminded of the two "anointed ones" spoken of in Zechariah destined to stand one on the right hand, the other on the left hand of the great Head of Israel when manifested in His millennial glory. "These," said the angel, "are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth." (Zech. iv. 14.) It is a vision of glory yet to come. These two "anointed ones" will be the agents by whom Jerusalem in the day of her glory, shall be supplied with that "golden oil" which shall enable her steadfastly and abidingly to shine in the earth as the Candlestick of God, diffusing heavenly light over all nations. The mother of James and John remembered this vision, and asked that that place of honour and of blessing might be given to her two children; but she was told that it was not for them; that it must be "given to those for whom it is prepared." There are many mansions and many glories in the Father's house and kingdom. Little did Moses think when he stood in the presence of the God of Israel on Sinai that the time would come when, on another Mountain, he would meet Him again, to know Him as the Lamb about to be led to the slaughter.

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The fires before which Moses had trembled at Sinai were soon to kindle upon the Holy One Himself. The Law of which Moses had been the minister, had indeed worked wrath. It was consuming Israel, and would have consumed them utterly, if the Head of Israel had not come to meet the destroying power of holiness, and to give His life a ransom for many.

Doubtless the soul of Moses has recognised in these things the fulfilment of that covenant which he had himself recorded as made with Abraham when God gave to him the land of Israel's inheritance. The Lord said unto Abraham, "I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle dove and a young pigeon. And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not. And when the fowls came down upon the carcases, Abram drove them away. And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram: and lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; and also that nation, whom

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they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." (Gen. xv. 7—18.) Here was a sacrificial covenant. He who made it was known at Sinai as the "burning furnace;" and afterwards when seen by Moses on the holy mount, He appeared as the light of Israel to illumine and to guide. Designated by these two symbols—the furnace and the lamp, He passed in vision between the parts of the divided sacrifices, to indicate, that rather than be false to His covenant, He would submit to be as those sacrifices—smitten and slain. No blessing could rest on Israel because of their guilt. Atoning sacrifice, therefore, was needed to give acceptableness, and to remove the guilt. Encompassed by sacrifice, Abraham could lie down and rest, and become the subject of sure and lasting blessing. Such, from that time to the present, has been the rest-place of the family of faith, and never more than at the present moment. The

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powers of darkness, like the fowls that hovered over Abraham are ever striving to snatch the sacrifices away; but the children of faith, like Abraham, arise and drive them from their prey. It is the one only place of rest: but Israel has despised it, and is despising it still. Yet never till, like Abraham, they shall lie down and rest under the protection of sacrifice, will the curse that now cleaveth to them cease, and the blessing come. "When ye shall have lain down among the ranges* (Israel is addressed) ye shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers as yellow gold." (Ps. lxviii. 13.) Defilement shall depart; grace, beauty and glory shall come. Horrors of darkness and billows of wrath will never more visit Israel after they "shall have laid down among the ranges." Jerusalem shall be called Hephzibah, and her land Beulah. The agencies of hell shall depart, and those of heaven come. Thoughts such as these, though immeasurably deeper and more developed, must have been present to the mind of Moses when he stood by the side of the great Head of Israel on the holy mount, "and spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." The gigantic evil of the present, and the blessedness of the future, must have been brought with marvellous vividness before the apprehension of his

* The sacrificial hooks or ranges, where in the Temple the bodies of the victims were brought, in preparation for sacrifice.

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soul, as well as the character of that mighty act about to be accomplished on Calvary, whereon was to be founded the operation of that grace which was eventually to effect the mighty change.

Yet Israel, though laden with sins, had not at that time filled up the measure of their iniquities. Although Jerusalem was "the killer of the Prophets, and the stoner of them who were sent unto her," and was about to increase infinitely the burden of her guilt by shedding the blood of the Holy One, she was, nevertheless, as yet, in the youth-time of her evil. "If," said the Lord Jesus, "they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" The old age of their iniquity was yet to come. There were yet to be sent many new mercies which they would reject, and they were yet to manifest many new transgressions such as earth had never yet known. Even after they had shed the blood of the Holy One, mercy still lingered around them, and well-nigh the first act of the Holy Ghost after the Ascension of the Lord Jesus into Heaven, was an address to Jerusalem and her Rulers, proffering the return of the Lord Jesus and the manifestation of His kingdom in glory *if* they, *as a nation*, would convert and be healed. The words are notable. "Repent and be converted that your sins may be blotted out, that so the times of refreshing might come * from the

* Οπως αν ελθωσιν.

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presence of the Lord, and that He might send Jesus before ordained for you, whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all that God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets that have been since the world began." (Acts iii. 19.) This message was addressed to Israel corporately. If they had heard it and turned, and made confession, the Lord Jesus would have returned, and the morning without clouds would have dawned on them and on a groaning world. But they refused: their "sinews were iron, and their brow brass"—they strengthened themselves in their iniquity; stoned Stephen when full of the Holy Ghost, his face shining as the face of an angel; quenched the testimony of the Holy Ghost, and drave the Church of God from Jerusalem. Then it was that Lo-ammi and Lo-ruhamah was fully written on them. The shepherd-staff "Bands," under which they had long been fed, was broken, and the platform on which Judah and Israel might have been restored to unity, was destroyed. Israel was broken out of their olive-tree—the Abrahamic olive-tree, whose sap is promise and grace; and in their room Gentiles were graffed in. Paul longed to minister in Jerusalem; but the Lord Jesus forbad. "Depart," said He, "for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles."

Yet even in this, their rejection, there lingered still a thought of mercy. Would not the consciousness of abandonment arouse them? Would they

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not be moved to jealousy by seeing Gentiles fostered and prospered under blessings which they had despised? Would they not be humbled when their consciences recognised that the testimonies of the God of Israel were committed to Gentile lips, and that miracles and signs were wrought to confirm these testimonies? But this lesson also was in vain. The Apostle Paul, who loved them so well, leaves this description of their condition: "They please not God, and are contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for wrath is come upon them unto the end"—*εφθασεν εις τελος.*

The darkest part, however, of Israel's night of sin and sorrow is yet to come. "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, *and also the night.*" The darkest part of the night immediately precedes the dawn. Israel, especially in these Western parts of Europe, where they have been sheltered and even favoured, have begun to display symptoms of the coming apostasy. Many among them, declining to receive Scripture as an authoritative guide, are giving themselves over to the follies of Modern Rationalism. Yet they are philanthropic and intellectual, and unchargeable with the idolatry and much of the moral licentiousness that has for ages polluted Christendom. Their condition is beginning very closely to resemble the fearful picture drawn by the Lord Jesus of their state at

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the end of the age. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation." Freed for many centuries from the loathsome idolatries and abominations that once characterised them, Israel has become like a house swept and garnished, but empty. The Spirit of God is not there. They are as a habitation awaiting an occupant. Accordingly, Satan, finding amidst all the wicked nations of the earth, no nation so suited for his purposes as Israel, will, with a sevenfold power of evil, enter into them and dwell there, and use them so that all their past displays of evil shall be but as a *unit* compared with *plenitude*. What picture can give us a more awful view of the now near future than this?

We are told in Daniel that there will be a time (and it is drawing near) when Israel, after its long fall, "shall be holpen with a little help." The Providence of God will cause the nations to permit them to regather to their Land: but it will not be for blessing, but for judgment. "And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of Man, the

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house of Israel is to me become dross: all they are brass, and tin, and iron, and lead, in the midst of the furnace; they are even the dross of silver. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Because ye are all become dross, behold, therefore, I will gather you into the midst of Jerusalem. As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it: so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you. Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the Lord have poured out my fury upon you." (Ezekiel xxii. 17—22.) Very plain are these words. Hitherto the action of God's hand towards Israel has been to scatter them: soon it will be reversed, and He will gather them. "Many shall cleave to them with flatteries," and for a season they shall seemingly prosper. What measurably they have been in time past, that they will be again, and far more abundantly—"replenished from the east, and soothsayers like the Philistines, they shall please themselves in the children of strangers. Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots: their land also is full of idols; they worship the

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work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made: and the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himself: therefore forgive them not." (Isaiah ii. 6.) The great head of the Roman World—Antichrist, will favour them; will make a covenant with them, and they and he will vie with each other in defying God and outraging His laws. "Wherefore hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report. For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch

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himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it. For the Lord shall rise up as in mount Perazim, he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act." (Isaiah xxviii. 14—21.) The day of their calamity will be at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. (See Deut. xxxii. 35.)

But God will not forget His covenant of grace with Abraham. When Antichrist shall begin to practise in Jerusalem, speaking smooth things and flatteries, the voice of God shall once more be heard there in the ministry of reconciliation. The sure pledge of the final blessedness of the Land of Immanuel has already been given in that He hath there laid that foundation Stone, elect, precious, that shall stand fast for ever, and whosoever believeth thereon shall not be confounded. Accordingly, at the very moment when their covenant with Hell is being formed, God will raise up in the midst of apostatising Israel a mighty testimony to all that His Apostles and Prophets have declared, both of grace and of judgment. His servants will again testify to "the acceptable year of the Lord, and also to the day of vengeance of their God." They who bear this testimony will bear it with a vigour, and power, and faithfulness that since the days of the Apostles hath not been. They will overcome because of the blood of the Lamb; and because of the word of their testimony, and will not love their lives unto

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death. (See Rev. xii. 11.) Satan's rage will be kindled, and the strength of the Ten apostate kingdoms will be put forth in all its fulness against them. They and their testimony will be crushed. Antichrist will enter Jerusalem as Jerusalem's sovereign Lord. He will place his idol in the Temple of God, and his throne on the mountain of God; and the name and authority of Jehovah will be supplanted by the name and authority of one whose symbol in Scripture is a Beast that ascendeth from the bottomless pit, full of names of blasphemy.

Up to this moment believers in Jesus are allowed to tarry in Jerusalem: but as soon as the Idol of the great Blasphemer is placed in the Temple of Israel to be worshipped there, they are commanded instantly to flee; for then shall there be "affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the creation that God created unto this time, neither shall be." (Mark xiii. 19.)

If Jerusalem were not beloved for the fathers' sake—if it had not been the place which God hath chosen to put His name there, Israel would be abandoned to their doom. Well will they have deserved abandonment. The testimony of Moses; the testimony of the Prophets—the testimony of John the Baptist—the testimony of the Lord Jesus—the testimony of His Apostles, and the closing testimony to grace given by those who will then leave Jerusalem, will all have been rejected. No light will remain: all will be darkness. Yet God will still have there

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a hidden remnant. Jerusalem will be still His City, and Zion His holy mountain. "Yet have I inaugurated my King upon Zion the mountain of my holiness,"—a declared purpose yet unfulfilled, but because of its certainty spoken of as past. The Enemy will have possessed himself of the heritage of the Lord; but when the Enemy shall come in as a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him. God will suddenly send into Jerusalem two individuals who will confront the great Apostate of the earth with an authority similar to that with which Moses confronted Pharaoh, and Elijah, Ahab. "I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the whole earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will." No power of man or of Satan will be able to touch their persons, or quench their testimony until it has been fully borne. Their mission will not be to preach the acceptable year of the Lord: they will declare the day of vengeance of their God. The testimony to grace will be withdrawn

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from Jerusalem when the servants of Jesus quit it; and it will not in this Dispensation be restored. A city tenanted by blaspheming infidels will, as such, be addressed. The past will be brought in review before them. They will be told what they have rejected in the past; and they will be told what awaits them in the future—even "the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." Their consciences will be made to feel that the summer is past, the harvest ended, and that they are not gathered.

As respects Jerusalem, the present Dispensation of grace will virtually end as soon as the Idol of Antichrist is established and worshipped in the Temple of God. With the last of the disciples of Jesus who quit the gates of Jerusalem, the Gospel will depart. To apostate Israel will be left that "fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation that shall devour the adversaries." Then will have come the time for the words of Moses to be sounded in their ears. "A fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell and shall consume the land with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischiefs upon them: I will spend mine arrows upon them. They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat and with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both

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the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of grey hairs." (Deut. xxxii. 22.) Words such as these (and they abound in the Prophets) will show us the character of the scene in which the Witnesses testify. The words of Elijah when he said, "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away." (1 Kings xix. 10.) These words do but feebly describe the isolation and danger of the two last Witnesses of God in the midst of rebellious Israel. Yet they shall accomplish their work. God by miracle and by fire will defend them; but when their testimony is completed they shall succumb. Man and Satan will again triumph. The streets of Jerusalem will once more be reddened with the blood of these two great martyrs. "And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry

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and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth." The voice of Truth will be effectually stilled in Jerusalem; but it will ring with the voice of triumphant blasphemy, and with the merriment of Hell. Nevertheless, there shall be a remnant. Though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant shall be spared. (Isaiah x.) The testimony of the Witnesses will not be altogether fruitless. Although their ministry, like that of John the Baptist, will not be a ministry of grace, but be a preparatory ministry only,* yet the preparation, on all hearts reached by it, will be effectual. There are some whose hearts will be softened, broken, and humbled. They will be

* We find in the Acts an example of this semi-preparation for the Gospel of grace. "And it came to pass when Apollos was at Corinth, Paul, having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus; and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed? (εἰ πνευμα ἁγιον ελαβετε πιστευσαντες). And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." Here is an example of some elected by the preparatory ministry of John, who were not brought into the Church, until they had received the further testimony of Paul.

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protected, borne through the day of fiery visitation, and in the millennial earth be received into the fulness of the grace of the Lord Jesus. "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the Land (Malachi iv. 5) with a curse." "And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God." (Zech. xiii. 8.)

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THE KING OF ISRAEL.

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DAVID

THE KING OF ISRAEL.

BY

BENJAMIN WILLS NEWTON.

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ADVERTISEMENT TO SECOND EDITION.

THE first edition of this work was published upwards of twenty years ago. The present edition has been revised throughout, but has not been materially altered. The chief difference between this and the first edition is the addition of a new chapter on "The Threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite," with appended Notes on the Thirtieth Psalm.

APRIL, 1874.

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DAVID.

UNCONDITIONAL promise, *wholly* dependent for its accomplishment on GOD, is the only resource available for a being thoroughly ruined like man. The power of secure and certified blessing was established in the earth from the moment that God unconditionally said to Abraham, "Blessing, I WILL bless thee." That which is thus freely and unconditionally promised, is not earned; neither can it be forfeited. The means and the end are alike secure; for they depend on God, whose faithfulness cannot swerve; and whose power, seeing that it is almighty, cannot fail. Such was the character of Abraham's blessing. He received it not by works of righteousness which he had done, but through faith, for he was justified as "ungodly." His was "the blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works."

But whilst the history of Abraham and that of his immediate descendants, exhibits the blessedness of those for whom God undertakes the responsibility of accomplishing His promises, the corporate history of Israel subsequently, affords a far different lesson. Ignorant equally of God and of their own hearts, they took upon themselves, at Sinai, the responsi-

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bility of earning by *their* faithfulness to God, blessings which, in His covenant with their fathers, God had made dependent on *His* faithfulness to them. As far as in them lay they abrogated the covenant of grace; and made not God, but themselves, the pillar of their future hopes. True indeed, that covenant has not been really cancelled, as the future corporate history of Israel will by and by abundantly testify; but from Sinai to this present hour, their collective history has fearfully manifested what man becomes when he takes upon himself the responsibility of obtaining and preserving his own blessings. Laws outraged as soon as received, and mercies forfeited as soon as given, have been and are the characteristics of Israel's history; nor is the cup of their evil and calamity yet full.

Nevertheless, there is many an evidence that Israel have been and still are God's people, "beloved for the fathers' sakes." Though divided amongst all nations, and scattered to the four winds of Heaven, they still remain a separate and peculiar people. There has ever been amongst them, in every age, a remnant according to the election of grace. We still turn to their recorded history as supplying the types and pledges of mercies to be fulfilled in Him in whom all nations shall be at last fully blessed. The interventions of God on their behalf terminated not in the temporary blessing which was their immediate result—they were, and they are, the indications and the pledges of blessings yet to come, in Heaven as well as earth. When we read

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of Joshua, and David, and Solomon, do we think merely of *them*, or do we see in their histories the prophetic record of an everlasting day? To Israel's history alone belongs this prerogative of instruction as to the future. Fruitful in testimony to Christ, it teaches us either His personal excellency and glory; or else instructs us as to the manner in which His Spirit acts amongst His people, whilst the conflict between Truth and falsehood, between God and the Deceiver, yet continues. The darkest periods of Israel's recorded history have thus in them a light which *grace* has kindled, and which no circumstances shall quench, until it merges in the brightness of the final day.

The call of David to kingship over Israel was one especial instance of these interventions of God's mercy. Kingship, like Priesthood, was an office necessary to the welfare of His people. Whether exercised, as by Moses and David, in leading *from* difficulty and danger *towards* rest, or as held by Solomon in the midst of peace attained, with every enemy silenced, and every difficulty overcome—kingship is, in either case, essential to the welfare of those who need direction as well as gift—control as well as endowment. Mercies bestowed are not without corresponding responsibilities; and if such mercies happen to be received in an evil day in the midst of threatening enemies, a directive hand is the more needed to guide, to encourage, and to rule. To kingship, under such circumstances, David was called.

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In order to estimate aright the period at which David lived, we may briefly retrace the previous history of Israel, remembering that the things that happened unto them happened as ensamples, and are recorded as admonitions to us, who live in a dispensation so fearfully analogous in circumstances of disastrous failure.

Israel when called out of Egypt and constituted God's people, were designed to serve under Him as their banner, against His enemies—enemies respecting whom He had sworn, saying, that He would "have war with them from generation to generation." But besides their being thus called to be "the host of the Lord," they were also His *priestly* people. The oracles of God and the service of God were committed to *them*, whilst darkness rested on the whole earth besides. They had a Priesthood, whose lips were to keep knowledge, that the people might learn from them the ways of the Lord of hosts. But what had been the result of all these privileges? The Priesthood in the house of Eli had so failed—had so become the minister of sin, that men, instead of being taught the ways of God, had turned in disgust away, and had learned to abhor the offering of the Lord. And as to their foes, they, instead of being subdued, had mightily increased in number and in power, and were vexing Israel on every side. The Ark of God had been taken; and though it had not been permitted to remain to grace the house of Dagon, yet it stood neglected and forgotten on the outskirts of Israel.

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Israel were not so blinded as to be wholly unconscious of the darkness of this picture. They recognised that their condition was disastrous, and they sought after a remedy; but they sought it not in God. The character and the direction of their energies alike needed to be changed—thoroughly changed, and this God could have effected. He could have moulded them anew. But Israel desired not this. They wished that their present energies should be stimulated, not altered, and hoped that development would accomplish that which could only be effected by radical change. Accordingly, they asked for a king—one morally, like unto themselves, who might develop and direct their powers, such as they then were; and God granted their desire. He gave them a king, noble in stature, and fair in form, one whom nature could thoroughly admire; excellent as Esau in the eyes of Isaac; and Israel welcomed him. Possessed of every natural advantage, fully endowed by God with the authority that attached to the headship of His people; aided, too, by that miraculous agency that was then officially connected with the throne of Israel, counselled by Samuel, favoured by the people, Saul entered on the headship of Israel abundantly supplied with all instrumental means for the service of the truth, and people of God, one thing only being wanting—a heart to confide in and wait on God. But that want was fatal, for it caused supremacy to be given to nature, not to God. Saul ruled in the power of nature. His own thoughts, his own appre-

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hensions of expediency, were his guide. God had expressly commanded that the Amalekites should be utterly destroyed: but it seemed best to Saul that some of them should be spared, and they *were* spared. He thought it expedient that the Gibeonites should be slaughtered, and they *were* slaughtered, despite the solemn pledge that all Israel had given for their preservation. His energies, which were not less than his endowments, were ever employed in cherishing things that God hated, and in persecuting that which God loved; and they left him, at last, prostrate at the feet of the witch of Endor—forsaken of God, too weak to stand alone, and therefore the servant of sorceries and demons. Such was, and such ever will be, the end of the unsanctified energies of nature when seeking to preside over the people, or the truths of God. Saul indeed has passed away: his history has ended as a tale that is told, but Israel and Christendom remain. Their history will yet again exhibit the end of Saul-like principles, and Saul-like deeds.

But the progress of evil, and the infliction of judgment thereon, are not instantaneous—for God is long-suffering. His eye had long discerned the character of Saul's evil course, and His prophet had given the fullest warning. Nevertheless, all *ostensible* authority and *official* calling of God remained with Saul, even long after Samuel had pronounced his doom. *There*, consequently, all who judged by the outward appearance would still have believed the favour of the God of Israel to be. Yet *there* it

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was not. Just as before, when the strength of God's people was being wasted under Pharaoh, Moses, their deliverer, was hidden as a shepherd in a wilderness; so, when Israel was again found in circumstances of deeper, though less ostensible, peril (deeper because the fountain-head of influence in Israel itself was poisoned) we again find the hope of Israel concealed in the unknown shepherd of an humble flock—one not deemed worthy even by his father to be presented with the rest of his household before the prophet of God. "And Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children? And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep. and Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither." Such is the first mention of David the king of Israel. "He chose David, also, his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: from following the ewes great with young, He brought him to feed Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands"—words true indeed of David, but having respect also to One greater than he.

An incident is recorded of the shepherd life of David that sufficiently marked his character, and his destiny. He thus narrated it to Saul: "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose

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against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear." Here were both energy and courage, two needful qualifications for a king; but then it was an energy and courage that drew its resources from God. David took care to add, "*The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear.*" And what was the occasion that drew forth this energy, and this faith? The loss of one poor lamb. Other shepherds might have deemed the loss trivial, and thought themselves happy in their own escape; but David had the heart of a true shepherd, and it becomes a shepherd to care for and to love his sheep. Should a shepherd quietly behold a lamb devoured before his eyes? Love to the lamb, and faithfulness to his charge, alike required that he should act. But how could he meet so terrible a foe? How could a lonely stripling encounter a lion and a bear? He could not, save in faith towards God. But David was of faith. He trusted in God, and triumphed. The enemy was overcome—the lamb delivered, and himself strengthened and encouraged for the future. Experience of God's mercies worketh hope for the future, a hope that maketh not ashamed.

This early occurrence in the life of David sufficiently indicated his future destiny. His path was to be one of conflict, but one of triumph. In later periods of Israel's history, when the results of their manifold transgressions were finally settling in upon them, the servants of God, such as Zerubbabel,

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attained in their lowly and limited sphere of service a measure of success; but there were no triumphs as in the day of David—no recovery of universal Israel—no catholic psalms of victory. Endurance, not triumph, was the characteristic of their service. God's power supported them, but no miracles were wrought on their behalf—the human eye saw in their path nothing that it admired, much that it despised; and none but a remnant of Israel were ever associated with their service. But it was otherwise with David. He was appointed to triumph, and all Israel were to triumph with him. His course was to foreshadow the end of those conflicts which shall result in the reign of the Prince of Peace being established for ever. Nevertheless, the principles which sustained Zerubbabel in his apparently unrequited sorrows were not really different from those which carried David through suffering to a Throne.

Very soon after his victory over the lion and the bear, David, sent on an humble errand to the camp of Israel, found them all quailing before Goliah. It was not now a question of danger to a lamb of his flock—he beheld the armies of the living God trembling before the threats of a Philistine. The personal danger to himself was not so imminent as when the lion and the bear descended on his fold; but the emergency was greater, for *Israel* was in jeopardy, and the name of the God of Israel was dishonoured. Saul, the ostensible shepherd of God's people, found himself unable to confront the danger:

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no tongue responded to the challenge of the Philistine—no arm was raised in behalf of God's people, or God's truth; the energies of Israel seemed paralysed; their strength gone; their glory departed. But there was yet one person in whom the spirit of the true Shepherd of Israel dwelt. David, remembering the lion and the bear—remembering that the Lord his God had not failed to help him when the danger was less, and the loss trivial, judged that he might safely confide in the same faithful God, now that the danger concerned His people, and the honour of His own great name. Besides, if the heart of David had been moved by the danger of a lamb, was the danger of David likely to be an object of less solicitude to the Shepherd of Israel?

I need not dwell on the well-known circumstances of David's conflict with his mighty adversary. Goliah fell before the sling and the stone. The sling was, no doubt, an apt instrument in the hand of David; but he would as soon have thought of trusting in the unproved armour of Saul, as in the skill of his own practised hand. He trusted in God. He trusted not his own skill. God directed his hand, and the stone was guided to Goliah's brow. "Thou comest to me," said David, "with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into my hand." Thus Israel was delivered.

It would have been happy for David if the cause

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of Israel's sorrows had lain merely in the strength of their external enemies. How little such strength could avail against weakness, when that weakness was connected with God, was shown in the fall of Goliah. The real secret of Israel's weakness was their own abandonment of God. Nor was it merely as when in former days, they groaned in captivity under Midian, Moab, and the like. Their condition then was rather characterised by the inertness and listlessness of despair, than by activity of evil. But it was otherwise under Saul. He was himself energetic, and he stimulated the energies of Israel in a course contrary to God. David soon found that Israel, whilst thus guided, could be no more used against the Philistines, than could the armour of Saul; indeed, that Israel's present head was a foe more to be dreaded than the Philistines themselves. He had not merely to cope with apathy and indifference; he found an energy in Israel turned in active hostility upon himself.

The immediate cause of the hostility of Saul to David was the unwise song of the women of Israel. David, it is said, "behaved himself WISELY;" was scrupulously obedient to Saul, and "went out whithersoever Saul sent him; and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants." Thus far, Saul favoured David; but when the women came out of all the cities of Israel, and sang, saying, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands," the anger and jea-

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lousy of Saul were effectually kindled. If the women had made mention of the name of the Lord, if they had said with Miriam, "Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously;" or with Deborah, "Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes: I, even I, will sing unto the Lord; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel"—if they had given to the name of the Lord the same prominence they gave to the name of David, the result might have been different. But they made no mention of the Lord; they spoke only of David. Nature in them, acted on nature in Saul, and he "eyed David from that day and forward."

The folly or evil of men is, not unfrequently, used by God for the accomplishment of His own wise purposes. He might easily have restrained the song of the women, or obviated its effect on the heart of Saul: and if there had been anything in the ways of Saul with which David, as God's servant, could rightly have continued in association, His almighty power would doubtless have so ordered it; for He is "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil." But it pleased God to appoint that the purposes of Saul should ripen. Israel, and through them, God's people in every age, were, in Saul, to learn the difference of power directed by nature, and power directed by faith. Israel (and that, at a time when they most needed to have their steps guided aright) were not only to be separated from the man after God's own heart, but were to be set in deadly hostility

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against him. The Israelite and the Philistine were to find one point of common interest in their hatred and persecution of him whom God had chosen.

During the time that David remained in connection with the household of Saul, abundant opportunity was afforded to all in Israel, to become acquainted with him and with his ways. He went in and out among them. He fought their battles, and subdued their enemies. The snares laid for him by Saul ended only in accumulating fresh honours on his head—valueless indeed to him, except as attesting his character, and supplying him with the more to renounce, for the Lord's sake, when he retired into the wilderness. None therefore, in Israel, could say that they had no opportunity of knowing David. They *had* opportunity, and the conscience of Israel bore witness to his worth; they knew that God was with him. Yet, in the day of his distress, when penury, and danger, and the wilderness were his portion, who joined him? Conscientious conviction, or perhaps affection, might incline towards David; but then, honour and dignity, and wealth, and royalty were with Saul; and when weighed against such things, David's interests, and David's sorrows were but as dust in the balance. What madness to resign the courts of Saul for the cave of Adullum—to dwell with outcasts, and to forsake princes!

David, therefore, when he found it necessary to quit the house of Saul, stood emphatically alone. He became a solitary wanderer. "Then came David

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to Nob, to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, 'Why art thou ALONE, and no man with thee?'" It was strange in the eyes of Ahimelech, that the conqueror of Goliah—the captain of the mighty men of Saul—the son-in-law of the king, should be found *alone*. It was strange and sorrowful to David, too, and his heart began to quail under it; for danger and difficulty surrounded him. He had often, indeed, before known difficulty and danger: from the day of his conflict with Goliah he had known little else: but then, there was this difference,—in former difficulties he had been enabled to triumph. Some ray of brightness had gilded every cloud; some honour awaited him out of each affliction. But now, God seemed no longer to interfere on his behalf. The fell enmity of Saul was allowed to take its course; and God interfered not, either to subdue or to chasten. He appeared no longer to intend to raise David above circumstances, but to allow him to be overcome by them. David's heart seemed unable to bear this. To trust God whilst overcoming is one thing—to trust Him when being overcome is another.

Accordingly, David's faith—that faith which had stood so many trials, and had so often triumphed, David's faith gave way. When Ahimelech suddenly said to him, "Why art thou *alone?*" he answered by a lie. David said unto Ahimelech, "The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the busi-

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ness whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place." Ahimelech, little suspecting a lie from the lips of David, was effectually deceived—deceived, too, unto his ruin. David had certain requests to make to Ahimelech, and he made them (for his wisdom seemed to have forsaken him) whilst an Edomite, a servant and friend of Saul, was standing by; and Ahimelech, still suspecting nothing, acquiesced—an acquiescence which proved his ruin. The Edomite informed Saul, and was by him sent forth upon the glad work of vengeance, Ahimelech, and fourscore and five persons beside, who wore the priestly ephod, were slain, "and Nob, the city of the priests, smote he with the edge of the sword, both men and women, children and sucklings, and oxen, and asses, and sheep, with the edge of the sword." Such were some of the results of David's lie; even as he afterwards acknowledged to the one remaining child of Ahimelech, "*I*," said he, "have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father's house." Have we never known occasions on which the spirit of the Edomite has stimulated the natural energies of those who call themselves (and, perhaps, are) Christ's servants, to deeds of violence and persecution?

The request of David was twofold. He asked for the shew-bread, and he asked for Goliah's sword. Although the shew-bread was not allowed to be eaten by any except the priests, yet his petition for *it* was one capable of being preferred rightly, and

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in faith. It only argued acquaintance with the mercy and loving-kindness of God, to be assured that God would permit a ritual ordinance to be violated in order that the need of one of his distressed and persecuted servants might be relieved. The sins of Israel and of Saul, that had well nigh violated all His precepts, and destroyed all His ordinances, had instrumentally caused the distress of David; and now, if it were necessary that a ritual ordinance should be broken in order to meet the need of David, it was only another evidence of the effect of Israel's sin. The Lord has Himself declared that David ate of the shew-bread, and was guiltless. He might, therefore, have asked for the shew-bread in faith; but we can scarcely conceive any circumstances in which it could have been an act of faith to ask for Goliah's sword. That sword had been laid up behind the ephod—a memorial of the power and goodness of Him, through whom it had been won, and there it might fitly have remained. It well beseemed the place of votive offering: but surely, it augured ill for David, that *his* hand—that hand which had placed the sword of Goliah in the sanctuary of the God of Israel—that hand which had once taken the pebble and the sling as the symbol of its strength, because it trusted in the Lord of hosts,—it augured ill that his hand should be the first to withdraw the giant weapon from its resting-place in order that he might transfer to *it* a measure, at least, of that confidence which he was withdrawing from God. How different the con-

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dition of David now, and on the day of Goliah's fall! Then, trusting in the God of Israel, and associated with Israel, he had gone out in avowed weakness; but now, forsaking Israel and the land of Israel, he went forth armed with the sword of Goliah, to seek friendship and alliance with the Philistines, the enemies of Israel, and the enemies of God.

Unmoved however, by these things, and apparently unconscious of his sin, David pursued his way. Common prudence might have taught him, that, if he sought the friendship of Philistines, the sword of Goliah was not the most likely instrument whereby to conciliate their favour. But David's wisdom seemed to have departed. He entered the country of the Philistines, and went to Achish, the King of Gath. As might have been expected, the jealousy of the Philistines was instantly aroused. They, too, remembered the song of the women. They said, "Is not this David the king of the land? did they not sing one to another of him in dances, saying, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands?" David instantly comprehended his danger, "and was sore afraid." "And he changed his behaviour before them, and feigned himself mad in their hands, and scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down upon his beard." Such was the condition into which David had sunk himself. Saul himself could scarcely have wished for him a deeper degradation. "Then said Achish unto his servants, Lo, ye see the man is mad: wherefore then have ye brought him to me?

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Have I need of mad men, that ye have brought this fellow to play the madman in my presence? shall this fellow come into my house?" So Abimelech "drove him away, and he departed." (See Ps. xxxiv.) Such were the means, which the secret providence of God employed, to screen His servant from that threatening danger. "David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave of Adullam."

The Spirit of God has not left us without a record of the feelings with which his repentant and chastened servant entered the cave of Adullam. One of the Psalms bears this superscription—"A Psalm of David, when he changed his behaviour before Achish (margin), who drove him away, and he departed." (Ps. xxxiv.) The cup of sorrow which he had been made to drink, had broken his strong spirit; and he could now say, as he could not have said before, "The Lord is nigh unto them that be of a broken heart, and saveth such as are of a contrite spirit." If he had dreamed of rest or prosperity among the Philistines; if he had thought that they would have rejoiced in gaining the champion of Israel to themselves; if he had nurtured in his heart thoughts of vengeance against any in Israel, or against Saul—if by these means he had sought to sustain his spirit in the hour of adversity, the resource had failed. The reed had broken, and run into his hand, and pierced it. He found that it was a bitter thing and evil to have forsaken the living God—his own tried and faithful friend. His

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heart hastened back to him again, and the Lord refused not to be found of him. "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them. O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him. O fear the Lord, ye His saints: for there is no want to them that fear Him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Such were the words in which David described the joy of returning unto the rest of his soul. Almost every verse in the Psalm mentions the name of the Lord as the object of his confidence, and hope, and joy—for it was from the Lord that he had departed. Yet, it was not the joy of an unhumbled heart. He could experimentally speak of a "contrite spirit." He had learned a new lesson in the fear of the Lord, and desired humbly to teach it to others. "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good: seek peace, and pursue it." He had proved the evil of lying lips and a deceitful tongue, and now was able

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to warn others of the pitfall into which he had fallen: but he warned, not as one left to reap the harvest of his doings, but as one who could say, "The Lord redeemeth the soul of His servants: and none of those that trust in Him shall be desolate." Such were the feelings—such the experience with which David entered his habitation in the wilderness.

In the cave of Adullam, he was to learn new lessons of dependence on God. It would have been easy for God to have put forth His power, and subjected the enemies of David, and granted to him rest. It would have been easy for God to have done this; and this is what David's nature would have desired. But God had designs other than the mere exaltation of David. He intended to allow the evil of Saul and of Israel to exhibit itself. He intended to give to David some apprehension of the character of his own heart, and to cause him to learn subjection to a wisdom greater than his own. He intended also, to prove the hearts of His own people in Israel; and to try how many among them would discern, that the cave of Adullam was the only true place of excellency and honour in Israel.

But who joined him in the cave of Adullam? His brethren and his father's house did go thither to him. But did Jonathan join him there, or any of the great in Israel? Did Israel's princes, or any of them to whom David's tastes or affections may be supposed to have inclined, did such join him? No; "every one that was in distress, and every one that

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was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him." Such were by their disasters placed virtually without the order of Israel: but all who were under that order (so systematised had its evil become) were so poisoned by its influence, or else so cramped and fettered by its power, that they either lacked sensibility to discern the difference between the ways of Saul and the ways of David, or were without energy to act. Here indeed was one of the great sorrows of David. To be separated from those whom he loved, and loved in the truth (think, for example, how he loved Jonathan), to be placed in virtual antagonism to them and to their ways; to be associated with many, who joined him rather because constrained by misery, than because attracted by truth; and to be, as Nabal said, like a runaway servant, or a robber of the desert, this was indeed, a trial to David. But he was learning to acquiesce in the appointments of God. The words which he used at this moment to the King of Moab, show how truly he was learning subjection: for when he asked permission of the king to place his aged parents within the territory of Moab, he meekly added, "till I know what God will do for me."

One of the chief and peculiar trials of David whilst thus compelled to relinquish Israel, was, the being separated from the ostensible worship of God. The place of such worship could, by God's appointment, be found only in Israel. *There* was the place of the united service and the wor-

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ship of the tribes: and there, in association with them, David had been wont to worship. But now he was cut off even from this. Others could worship according to the appointed order, surrounded by multitudes in avowed communion of thought and feeling — all equally appearing the honoured and accepted worshippers of God. But David was banished from these things. He was a wanderer in the wilderness; in appearance, a forsaken outcast—not a worshipper. Yet, although neither priest, nor altar, were there — no worshipping multitudes—no outward celebrations—yet, where was the eye of the God of Israel really resting, in peaceful complacency? Where were the sounds which were really melody in his ear? Were they found in the worshipping throngs of Israel, or in the solitude of the wilderness of Judah, where David said, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips." Such was the Psalm of David whilst separated from Israel, and from Israel's worship in the wilderness. David indeed, was no longer privileged to behold the power and glory of God, as he had in times past

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beheld it: nevertheless, in his new circumstances of solitude and sorrow, it was given to him to prove a "loving-kindness that was better than life," and to recognise therein the earnest of mercies yet to come. "Because thou HAST BEEN my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings WILL I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after thee; thy right hand upholdeth me. But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes. But the KING shall rejoice in God: every one that sweareth by Him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped." Such was his confidence in God. He confided in Him for preservation indeed, and for deliverance; but not for deliverance merely—he anticipated being delivered as the KING who should finally behold his enemies fall, and be himself appointed to lead the worship of Israel — to guide their counsels, and direct their energies, according to that knowledge of God, which he was now learning in the wilderness.

Thus, then, he in whom the true hopes of Israel centred, had become silently separated by God, and brought into a wilderness just as Israel themselves had once been, when taken from Egypt and brought into the desert. It was a significant lesson, for all who had hearts to understand. It showed that God had begun to find the characteristics of Egypt in Israel itself, and that Jerusalem had entered on that course, whereby ultimately she will become,

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in the estimate of the Spirit of God, like Sodom and Egypt "called spiritually Sodom and Egypt." (Rev. xi.) When nature and expediency, and worldliness, and sin, guide the professing people of God in the use of the light and truth whereunto they are separated—when those truths become debased and perverted, and misused knowledge adds potency to evil, what path is open to them that fear God, save that of separation? Was it otherwise, when a greater than David came and found Israel and Israel's rulers full of a spirit, of which Saul the king, and Doeg his Edomite servant, were but imperfect types? And did He not separate? Did He not call His little flock without the gate, bearing His reproach? And now, that professing Christianity has failed, and Christendom become the proud seat of the world's evil in its most advanced forms, can they who have the spirit of faith, acquiesce in, and follow the ways of Christendom? No more than David could rest in the house of Saul: or Jesus, in the courts of Caiaphas, or of Cæsar.

There are few things more important in the sight of God, than this *second* separation. Israel was a separated body; yet David was separated from Israel itself. It is in this *second* separation that the wilderness Psalms become appreciated. We see in them lines of experience, which we too, may in our measure verify. They teach us also to understand better the rejection and sorrows of Him, who embodied in Himself all that was true, all that was

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of God in David, apart from David's imperfections, and without David's failures.

Happy are they who, at this present hour of the Church's history, know anything of separation unto this second wilderness. It has its sorrows, but it has also its joys. The sorrows will fade, but the joys will brighten till they meet the light of the eternal day.

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II.

NABAL AND ABIGAIL.

When God has bestowed on any of His servants peculiar grace, it is often subjected to peculiar trial, that its excellency may be the more fully manifested. The chill blast of the north wind, as well as the more gentle influences of the south, when it blows upon the garden, causes the spices thereof (if such there be) to flow forth. Nor has there ever been any heart (One only excepted) that has not *needed* discipline. Hence not unfrequently, the trials of God's servants are prolonged as well as various.

But besides these ends which respect the servants of God themselves, God is pleased by means of their characters and their sufferings, to test others. Their characters may be appreciated, or they may be despised; their sufferings may be soothed by sympathy, or aggravated by reproach; the hand of kind compassion may be extended towards their necessities, or cruelty may delight in multiplying their miseries. Thus was it with Him, of whom it was said, that He was set "as a sign." * * * * * * "*in order that the thoughts of many hearts*

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might be revealed." His presence tested the hearts of men. From some it drew forth confession, thanksgiving, and praise — thoughts according to God: from others it elicited thoughts of enmity and hatred—proofs of the darkness and corruption that dwelt within. So, in measure has it ever been with Christ's servants, and Christ's truth.

The history of David in the wilderness, affords a remarkable example of the diverse judgment formed by two different hearts in contemplating the same object—one seeing and acknowledging the presence and power of God, where the other saw nothing save that which it contemned and scorned. Near to David in the wilderness, dwelt Nabal, a man great in the abundance of his riches; one who in the midst of all the convulsions that were distracting Israel, had contrived to root himself in prosperity and earthly good—rich as David was poor, honourable as David was despised.

Nabal had heard of David. However absorbed in schemes of selfish acquisition, he could not shut out from himself the knowledge of a name that had once made all Israel rejoice, and was still causing all Philistia to tremble. He had heard of the fame and of the sorrows of David. It was therefore no stranger whose messengers, in the day of Nabal's festivity, presented themselves with words of peace at his gates, and asked for a blessing from his hands. "David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name: and

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thus shall ye say to him that liveth in prosperity, Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel. Ask thy young men, and they will show thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David."

An opportunity of owning and befriending David was thus suddenly presented to Nabal, an opportunity worthy of a descendant of Caleb—for Nabal was of Caleb's house. There were few more honoured names in Israel's history, than that of Caleb, the faithful companion of Joshua. When Israel, unsatisfied with the assurances of the Lord their God, determined on inspecting for themselves (see Deut. i. 22), the land which He had Himself described to them, and promised for a possession, their eyes, as might have been expected, were quickly arrested by the sight of new and unanticipated dangers—and as they beheld the dangers, they forgot God. The giant might of the Anakims, and the strength of cities walled up to heaven, became greater in their eyes than the invisible strength of the Lord their God. Terrified and disheartened by the sight which they had asked to see, they murmured and rebelled. Joshua and Caleb only out of

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all who had beheld the land, remained faithful to God. And when at length the long-expected hour arrived for the land to be divided, as God had said, the faithfulness of Caleb was not forgotten. He received a princely inheritance among his brethren, even the land whereon his feet had trodden, a watered land with upper and with nether springs. But now the hour of Caleb had passed, and Nabal had come. Succession had brought Nabal, the fool, (for such is the meaning of his name) into the place of Caleb the man of faith. It was but an ensample of what succession had done throughout Israel as a whole; and yet, succession was *in that dispensation*, a principle appointed of God—appointed that it might be tried. And what was the result? Nabal was written on all the official arrangements of Israel!

And observe the character of the test applied to Nabal. An opportunity was afforded of owning that person, who, though an outcast in the wilderness, was really he in whom all the hopes of Israel centred—one whom Samuel had anointed—one in whom the blessing of the God of Israel had manifestly rested throughout all his afflictions. How surely would Nabal's forefather—Caleb—have recognised, in David, the chosen servant of the Lord! But Nabal discerned none of these things. Seeing, he saw not; hearing, he heard not. The evil of Saul, or the excellency of David, the spread of falsehood, or the growth of truth, the presence of God's favour, or the tokens of His displeasure, were all alike to

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Nabal. David had been compelled to resign his place of honour in the courts of Saul. His flight from the fierce fury of Saul, admitted of being spoken of as the act of a servant who had run away from his master: and Nabal gladly availed himself of the plausible misrepresentation. "Who," said he, "is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master." His churlish soul, adding insult to injury, dismissed the messengers of David with contumely and scorn.

It is a hard thing to endure. David had endured, and was enduring much. He was suffering from the active enmity of Saul, and from the dull apathy of Israel. But both were great, and so to speak, dignified enemies. Saul was Israel's king; and Israel were God's people. It seemed comparatively honourable to be persecuted by *them*: but it was a far different thing to endure the reproach of one so despicable as Nabal. "Surely in vain," said David, "have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness." He forgot that all suffering, all reproach, that is *for God's sake*, is equally honourable, whether it come from a monarch, or from a churl. His proud spirit was roused, and he who had refused to lift up his hand against Saul, and had never unsheathed his sword against Israel: he who was called to fight, not for his *own sake* against his *own* enemies, but for the *Lord's sake* against the *Lord's* enemies, he—David, forgot his calling, and swore that Nabal should expiate his offence in blood.

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But there was dwelling in Nabal's house one whose thoughts had no communion with his. Abigail was Nabal's wife. Bound to him by a tie which none but God could break,—obliged to own him as her lord, she had probably spent many a day of bitter anguish, surrounded by circumstances that her spirit loathed, and debarred from all in which it would have rejoiced. Such was the appointment of God. She had bowed to it; and her submission had not been in vain. Excluded from many a sphere of active service, which, under other circumstances she might have filled, meditation seems to have been her resource. She had considered and estimated aright, the condition of Saul, of Israel, and of David. The dark clouds of sorrow that had so long and so deeply surrounded David, had not prevented her from discerning that he was the man whom God was blessing, and would bless for ever. She saw, to use her own words, that "the souls of his enemies should finally be slung out, as out of the middle of a sling, but that his soul should be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord his God." "And it shall come to pass, when the Lord shall have done to my lord according to all the good that He hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel; that this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself: but when the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, then remember thine handmaid."

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Such were the words with which Abigail, taking the place of intercession, met David. There are few things more honoured of God than intercession. It is the opposite to that habit of soul that delights to discover evil, in order that it may gratify itself by rushing into the judgment seat, and awarding the vengeance that it deems to be due. Abigail interceded; and observe the consequences of her intercession. Nabal and his household were preserved from destruction, and David restrained from shedding innocent blood—for every male in the house of Nabal had been marked by David for destruction. She was able, too, to admonish David. Could David at that moment have pourtrayed as did Abigail, the dignity of his own high calling? Angered and excited, he had lost the sense of what he himself was, and of what his enemies were in the estimate of God: the remembrance of all this had faded on *his* soul, but in Abigail's it remained in vividness and power. Reminding him of his calling, pourtraying his future destiny, she asked him whether such an one as he should shed blood causeless; whether it became him to avenge *himself;* whether he wished to prepare for himself anguish and remorse to embitter the day of his coming joy. David heard her words, and instantly recognised the intervention of God. "Blessed," said he, "be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with my own

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hand." Here was indeed honour and reward for Abigail : a sudden recompense for her loneliness and sorrows. How little had she anticipated whilst dwelling in the solitude of Carmel, imprisoned amidst the sordid interests of Nabal, that she was thus to be used as a messenger of God to sway the course of the destined head of Israel, and to save him from a deed of deadly sin. Suddenly she was called to this honour. In the morning she arose expecting to behold, as usual, the low festivities of one whose heart was as his name, but in a moment she found herself going forth like a prophet of God to warn, to encourage, and to direct, His chosen servant.

Abigail fulfilled her mission ; and then, with blessing resting on her head, she meekly retired to the place of her sorrows again. The day of danger had been spent by Nabal in revelling and drunkenness. Abigail on her return found him stupefied by wine, unconscious therefore of the peril that had come so near his household ; unconscious of the mercy of his deliverance. The night passed, and the morning came. It rose as a morning of joy to his delivered house ; but it was no morning of joy to him. He heard from the faithful lips of Abigail the tale of his deliverance ; he heard of the instrumentality by which it had been wrought. Her words were as arrows to his soul — his heart withered, and he died. So must it finally be with every Nabal-like heart. It cannot greet the day of God. When the morning shall arise without clouds, and

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others shall give thanks for their great deliverance and say Alleluiah, every such heart will quail and perish for ever.

The hand of God avenged His servant, and freed the energies of Abigail. She became the spouse of David—the partner of his dangers, and subsequently of his triumphs. Her path indeed was not without its sorrows. Even David himself, as we shall afterwards see, was the means of involving her in perils she had never known before; but in suffering with him, she was suffering with one by whom God was working His work of blessing in Israel, and this was sufficient compensation for this woman of faith.

They who are most engaged in the activities of ostensible service, are not always best able to appreciate their own position. Abigail, ostensibly unemployed for God, suffering too from causes that were private rather than connected with His truth and service, had nevertheless formed conclusions so true, so firmly established in her soul, that when the hour of emergency arrived, she was instantly able to act with an energy and decision that influenced in result the whole destinies of Israel. Let this be an encouragement to all, who fearing God and seeking to learn of Him, yet mourn alone in secret places.

Abigail, indeed, had not so subjected herself to Nabal as to make his will paramount to the will of God. Whenever the duty she owed to God clashed with the duty she owed to her husband, there can be no question as to her decision. She was a woman of faith; she obeyed God rather than man. A proof

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of this was given in her resolve to meet and to propitiate David. If Nabal had been consulted, he no doubt would have forbidden her to proceed; but she saw what duty demanded—duty to her household, to her husband and to God; and therefore she hesitated not to go unbidden. Having fulfilled her duty she returned, and again submitted herself to Nabal; yet only so far as she could obey God in obeying him—a path difficult indeed, and full of trial. God saw the difficulty, and Himself opened a way of deliverance.

We must beware indeed of thinking that the same manifested interference as was then vouchsafed to Abigail must necessarily be granted now. The era of David was one in which God was avowedly subjecting evil, and causing His servants to triumph over it; whereas the present is a period when evil is *for a season* being allowed to prevail, and endurance rather than triumph is made the characteristic of God's people. "Brethren," said the Apostle, "we count them happy that ENDURE." Nevertheless, though the hour of deliverance may be delayed, and though truth may be denied its triumph now, the joy of victory will not be less welcome when at last it comes. The sufferings of David ended in a throne—those of Jeremiah in a dungeon—but were the latter less precious in the sight of God? Will they be esteemed less precious in that final day?

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III.

DAVID IN ZIKLAG.

THERE are few periods in the life of David in which his patient endurance was displayed more conspicuously than in his last interview with Saul. Saul had once more fallen into his power; but David again refused to avail himself of the advantage. He would not deliver himself by means that God did not sanction, nor stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed. Recognition of the excellency of David, and confession of his own sin, was extorted, even from the lips of Saul. Then said Saul, "I have sinned: return, my son David; for I will no more do thee harm * * behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly." But David had learned not to confide in Saul, or in any *man*. "Surely men of high degree are vanity, and men of low degree are a lie." In his reply, he made no reference to the promises of Saul—he did not say, "As thy life was much set by this day in mine eyes, so let my life be much set by in *thine* eyes," but he said, "So let my life be much set by in the eyes of THE LORD, and let HIM deliver me out of all

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tribulation." Then Saul said to David, "Blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt both do great things and also shalt still prevail." Such were the last words of Saul to David. He never saw David again: he never had the opportunity of persecuting him again. The relation of Saul to David closed with these words. Patient faith had so prevailed as to extort a blessing, even from its adversary.

Yet the moment in which faith attains any triumph, is often one of peculiar danger. Self-confidence may be engendered by success, and pride may spring out of honour that humility has won; or else, if faithfulness, after having achieved its victory, still finds itself left in the midst of danger and sorrow, the hour of triumph may be succeeded by one of undue depression and sorrowful disappointment. And thus it was with David. He had obtained this great moral victory; but his circumstances were still unchanged. Saul yet continued to be king of Israel: himself remained a persecuted outcast. As the period, when he had before spared the life of Saul, had been followed by days of lengthened sorrow, so he probably anticipated an indefinite prolongation of similar sufferings, and his heart quailed at the prospect. "And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines."

And yet the hour of Saul's fall and of his own deliverance was close at hand. The Lord was about to interfere, and to extricate His faithful servant

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from his long and sore afflictions. Almost the very last hour of his trial under Saul had come, yet at that last moment he failed: so hard is it for "patience to have her *perfect* work." David had just said, "*Let the Lord* deliver me out of all tribulation." It was a strong, and no doubt a sincere expression of confidence in God; but the feeling of the heart, as well as the expression of the lips, may often exceed the reality of our spiritual strength; and therefore, not unfrequently, when strong expressions have been used, they who have used them are tested by some peculiar trial; that so, if there be weakness, it might be detected, and no flesh glory in the presence of God.

This was not the first time that David had retired to Gath of the Philistines. He had once before sought Gath as a refuge; had found it no refuge, and fled from it in dishonour. On the previous occasion, however, of his quitting Israel, his heart was, notwithstanding his sorrow, buoyant. When the priest spoke to him of the sword of Goliah, the quick energy of his reply—"there is none like that; give it me"—indicated an unbroken elasticity of spirit, that appeared more than equal to the pressure. But it was otherwise now. Now his heart was dejected and depressed; and the dejection of nature, no less than its elation, is a foe to the patient endurance of faith. Accordingly, the faith of David again gave way; and he again fled for refuge to Achish of Gath.

The Scriptures do not inform us what it was that

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had so far changed the feelings of Achish, as to dispose him to receive with courtesy and kindness the very person whom he had before driven ignominiously from his presence. No doubt the circumstances of David were greatly changed. On the former occasion he had come alone; now he was the captain of six hundred well-tried warriors. When he came before, the relation in which he stood to Saul and to Israel was but imperfectly known; now it was notorious that he was really separated from Israel, and that Saul really regarded him as an enemy. Time also might have weakened among the Philistines the sense of their dishonour in the fall of Goliah—nor was Goliah's sword seen any longer in David's hand. But whatever the reason, Achish, we are told, received him; and not only received him but gave him Ziklag to dwell in as his own city. Thus the scheme of David seemed thoroughly to prosper. He found in Ziklag a rest to which he had long been a stranger. Himself, his family, his people, rested safe from the approaches of their dreaded foe. Providence seemed to have granted him this asylum as a blessing; and none but they who had the eye of faith would have judged otherwise. All else would have congratulated David, and whispered peace.

But rest reached by self-will or disobedience is anything rather than peace to the heart that fears God, and loves His service. David could not forget that Israel, whom he had forsaken, were God's people; nor that the Philistines, whom he had

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joined, were God's enemies. He could not but remember his own peculiar relation to God, and to his people—for Samuel had anointed him, and even Saul had blessed him as the destined king of Israel. His conscience, therefore, must have been ill at ease; and the stillness and rest of Ziklag would only cause him to be more sensible of its disquietude.

When the conscience of God's servants tells them that their position is wrong, one of their devices not unfrequently is, to give themselves, with fresh energy, to the attainment of some right end; as if rightly directed, or successful energy, could atone for committed evil, and satisfy the misgivings of a disquieted heart. Accordingly, David, still retaining the self-gained rest of Ziklag, resolved that it should not be the rest of inactivity, but that he would thence put forth fresh energies against the enemies of God, and of His people. The Amalekites were nigh. The Amalekites were they of whom the Lord had sworn that he would have war with Amalek from generation to generation. David therefore went up against them, and triumphed. Nothing could be more complete than his success—"he smote the land, and left neither man nor woman alive; and took away the sheep, and the oxen, and the asses, and the camels, and the apparel." Ziklag was enriched with spoil, and that the spoil of the enemies of the Lord. What prosperity then could be greater—what apparently more immediately from God?

And yet God was not with him to sustain him

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against the resulting difficulties and dangers that soon surrounded him; and of this, proof was speedily given. When Achish said to David on his return, "Whither have ye made a road to-day?" David was afraid. He was afraid to tell Achish the truth, and answered by a lie. David feared to tell the king of the Philistines that he had been destroying Israel's enemies and the Philistines' friends. He said, therefore, that he had gone up against Judah —"and Achish believed David, saying, He hath made his people Israel utterly to abhor him; therefore he shall be my servant for ever."

The consequences of the lie were soon apparent. The Philistines were gathering their armies together to fight with Israel: "and Achish said unto David, Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go out with me to battle, thou and thy men." This was an unexpected blow to David; but he had earned it for himself. It was one of the results of his having entered a path which he had opened for himself, and in which he had deemed it needful to protect himself by a lie. Better that he had remained in inactivity in Ziklag, than that he should have so acted apart from God as to bring himself by his energy into the supposed necessity of delivering himself by a lie. That lie involved further consequences. It induced Achish to confide in him as being what he professed to be—the deadly enemy of Israel. If David had told the truth, Achish would never have dreamed of enrolling him amongst the hosts of the Philistines. It was his own contrivance

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that had brought him there. He, who so well knew how to discriminate between the Philistines and the armies of the living God; and who, on the ground of that distinction, had so often sought and obtained the assistance of the God of Israel, now found himself leagued with the enemies of God for the destruction of God's people. He who had so distinctly refused to stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed, was now enrolled with those very hosts who were about to shed the blood of Saul, and of Jonathan too, upon the mountains of Gilboa. Such were the terrible circumstances in which David suddenly found himself. He seems to have looked upon them as hopeless, nor do we read of his attempting any remedy.

But David had not ceased to be the subject of care to the Great Shepherd of Israel. He had wandered, and was to be brought back. The secret providence of God again interfered, and separated him from the camp of the Philistines. The other lords of the Philistines, more prudent than Achish, were wroth with him for the confidence he reposed in David, and insisted on his dismissal. "Make this fellow return," said they, "that he may go again to his place which thou hast appointed him * * * lest in battle he be an adversary to us: for wherewith should he reconcile himself unto his master? should it not be with the heads of these men? Is not this David, of whom they sung one to another in dances, saying, 'Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands?" So David was again rejected. The song that had been

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intended for his honour before men, now for the third time brought him dishonour; though, in the hand of God, it became the instrument of his preservation. Achish, however, retained his confidence in David, and in reply to David's remonstrance, answered and said, "I know that thou art good in my sight, as an angel of God"—words that must have pierced David's soul, when he remembered how grievously he had deceived his benefactor.

There were few occasions in David's life where he had cause more thankfully to recognise the merciful interference of God than in this deliverance from the camp of the Philistines. If he had acted as a traitor, what more base, what more disgraceful than such requital of his benefactor? If on the other hand, he had fought against Israel, he would have been guilty of the blood of his people. We can easily suppose therefore, that he felt himself relieved of a heavy burden when he quitted the army of the Philistines, to return to his own peaceful Ziklag. He might easily have deceived himself into the belief that God, by His providence, was sanctioning his way. The gift of Ziklag at first—the quiet he had there enjoyed—his present extrication from the Philistines—might all be interpreted as evidences of providential care and sanction of God. We may easily suppose therefore, that it was with no little elasticity of spirit and self-congratulation, that David, as soon as the morning arose, obeyed the direction of Achish, and retraced his steps to Ziklag. It was the place where he had deposited all that was chiefly dear to him on

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earth—his wives and his children were there—it was the rest which he had formed for himself; but apart from God.

David therefore, and his band of faithful followers gladly, no doubt, returned to Ziklag. They returned to it; but they found it not. "They came to the city, and behold it was burned with fire; and their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, were taken captives." A band of the same Amalekites, whose country they had so lately spoiled, had fallen upon Ziklag in their absence, and wrought this fell work of ruin. "Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep."

It was indeed no wonder that David's heart was stricken. He had never before known what it was to be smitten like this by the chastening hand of God. Of late he had seemed even more than ordinarily to be the subject of His care: but now the relation of God seemed suddenly changed into one of severity and wrath. During the years that David had watched his father's flock, during his residence in the courts of Saul, during the time of his sorrowful sojourn in the wilderness, during his late eventful history in Ziklag, he had never experienced anything but kindness and preservation from the hand of God. He had become so long accustomed to receive sure protection from God's faithful care, that he seems to have calculated on its uninterrupted continuance. He had lately said, "The Lord render unto every man his righteousness * * * and let

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Him deliver me out of all tribulation." But now the Lord Himself seemed turned into an enemy, and to fight against him. Nor could the conscience of David have failed to discern the reason. It must have owned the justice of the blow. Thus, however, the bitterness of his agony would be aggravated, not lessened.

Moreover, on all past occasions he had ever found some to sympathise with, and to console him in his afflictions. In the house of Saul, he had had the affection of Jonathan, and the favour of many beside: even in the wilderness, six hundred out of Israel had joined him, and had faithfully struggled with him through many a day of difficulty and danger: but now, they too abandoned him. Enraged at the sudden calamity, (for they also were bereaved of everything)—stung to the quick by a sense of its bitter consequences—imputing all to David (for it was he who had guided them to Ziklag)—even they who shrunk not from the sorrows of the cave of Adullam, and who had braved all the dangers of the wilderness, forsook him now. They all turned fiercely upon him as the author of their woe, and spake of stoning him. Thus stricken of God—execrated by his friends;—bereaved of all that he loved, David drank of a cup which he had never tasted before. He had earned it for himself. It was the fruit of his self-chosen Ziklag.

It is well for the servants of God, that He who hath abounded towards them in all wisdom and prudence is pleased, when He first calls them into His

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service, to endow them with a power eternal and unchangeable in its affinities, and therefore, independent of and above all the tendencies and affinities of nature. The energies and affinities of nature, so long as they operate, hinder and obstruct the Spirit of God; but when they fail, that Spirit remains—remains in the integrity of its strength, and is able to develop itself according to its own almighty fulness. It is *of* God and leads *to* God, and therefore the heart in whom it dwells surely reverts unto God at last; just as the needle, once touched with magnetic power, turns with steady constancy towards the unseen centre of attractive influence. Else, on what principle could the heart of David then—a heart that had wandered from God, and was at that moment quailing under His rebuke—how could such a heart, at such a moment, turn calmly and confidently to God in any power that nature could give? Nature shrinks from God always, but more especially when under His rebuke. It may turn to other refuges, but never to God. Saul, just at this very moment, found himself, too, environed with danger; and he turned to the witch of Endor. But of David it is said, "though greatly distressed, * * he encouraged himself in the Lord his God."

David instantly consulted God. We do not hear of his consulting God when he determined on settling in the land of the Philistines, nor when he went up against the Amalekites, nor when he deceived Achish by a lie: but now, in the extremity of his distress, he simply and confidingly consulted God.

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"And David inquired at the Lord, saying, Shall I pursue after this troop? shall I overtake them? And He answered him, Pursue: for thou shalt surely overtake them, and without fail recover all." See the goodness and perfectness of the grace of God. There was no delay in this answer—no reserve—no ambiguity; more even was told than David had asked. He was told not only that he might pursue, but that he should surely recover all. In a moment the black cloud of sorrow, that had hung so darkly over David's soul, was gone: agony gave place to joy: and he whom his companions had been dooming to death, stood suddenly before them as the honoured servant of the Lord his God, commissioned to pursue and to conquer. He did pursue, and all was as God had said. The enemy was overcome: everything that pertained to David and his company was recovered, and there was great spoil.

Abigail was among those who had been carried into captivity. We may imagine the acuteness of *her* sorrow, for her heart was sensitive, and able to estimate circumstances according to God. She had counted it an honour to leave the wealth and abundance of Nabal's house, in order to share the dangers of David, when dwelling as a dishonoured outcast in the wilderness: but she had little expected that he, to whom she had looked for sustaining her in the place of honour before God, would be the means of drawing her into circumstances that would result in her being delivered into the hands of the enemy. If

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she had unduly confided in David—if she had at all allowed him to fill a place in her regard which should have been held only by God, we can easily imagine the character of the lesson which she learned, during the days and nights of her perilous captivity. David, too, when he thought of Abigail and others with her, must have felt a poignancy of self-reproach, to which he had been before a stranger. He had not been accustomed to plunge those dear to him into dishonour and woe, but rather to guide them into positions of honour, and to sustain them there. The joy that he had known in being the servant of others for good, only made him feel the more acutely the anguish of being an instrument against them for evil. What more disastrous than when the energy that should guide aright is changed into an energy that leads astray? And yet, how many an instance of this is found in the present condition of the Church of God.

Nevertheless, in the midst of their most disastrous failures, the servants of God may still seek to form a right estimate of their condition, and to judge of it according to God. *That* is a privilege which no calamity can alienate—no catastrophe destroy. An ability to enter, in measure, into the thoughts of God, and to appreciate rightly the circumstances around him, was a grace which seems peculiarly to have characterised David; and was doubtless the reason of his being pronounced to be, notwithstanding his many failures, "the man after God's own heart." Whether in prosperity, or in disaster, or

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whilst being rescued from disaster, we constantly find in David certain traits of character which markedly contrast with the expressions and ways of those, who, though sharing the same circumstances had no participation in his feelings, or communion with his thoughts. When Joab exulted, David sorrowed. When others heard the curses of the foe, and wished to quench them in blood, David recognised the hand of God, restrained the arm of vengeance, and meekly bowed to the infliction. Again, when others abandoned themselves to rage or to despair, David encouraged himself in God.

The history we are now considering affords another example of the manner in which the feelings of David contrasted with those of others around him. Nothing but the most unmerited grace could have granted so great deliverance; and David felt it so. He saw that it was peculiarly an hour when every selfish claim should be silenced. He knew that instead of each considering how much his own individual hand had wrought—how much therefore might be appropriated to self, and denied to others—it was rather a time for liberality to put forth all its expansiveness, and to stretch to the very utmost the circle of its beneficence. Such were the thoughts of David. Freely he had received; freely he sought to give. But there were, says the Scripture, among those who went with David, "wicked men, men of Belial," who had other thoughts than these. Two hundred of David's little band, whilst pursuing the Amalekites, had fainted

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by the way. Their hearts were true; they would have followed if they could, but they had no more strength, and therefore David pitied and left them. Should these then share the spoil? The men of Belial answered, No! "Because they went not with us, we will not give them ought of the spoil." But what did David say? "Ye shall not do so, my brethren, with that which the Lord has given us, who hath preserved us, and delivered the company that came against us into our hand. As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall part alike. And it was so, from that day forward, that he made it a statute and an ordinance for Israel unto this day." Blessed ordinance indeed; which embodied the mind of one greater than David, for which His redeemed will praise Him for ever and ever.

But how fearfully different may be the effect produced on different persons by the same circumstances. David came out of this night of sorrow with a heart so disciplined, so instructed according to God, that its judgment could be adopted by God, and established as an enduring ordinance for his people: whereas others, though brought through the same dangers, and made recipients of like mercies, evinced a habit of soul, which marked them in God's sight as "wicked men, and men of Belial." What indeed more abhorrent to God, than that which would narrow the expansiveness of grace. What more abominable in His sight than a selfishness that seeks to extract out of His free

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mercies some excuse for aggrandising itself by depriving others of blessings.

David not only distributed of the spoil to all who had followed him in the wilderness, and shared his dangers there—he also remembered that there were some, who, though they had refused to quit their position in Israel, and had shrunk (as well they might) from the cave of Adullam, did nevertheless love and favour him. Yet though they had drawn back from following him, and had declined to partake of his cup of sorrow, David, in the hour of his triumph, refused not to them participation in his joy. "And when David came to Ziklag, he sent of the spoil unto the elders of Judah, even to his friends, saying, Behold a present for you of the spoil of the enemies of the Lord." Such is the liberality of a heart that has sought and found its portion in GRACE. Nor will it be otherwise in that coming hour, when TRUTH (having passed through its last conflict), the result of its struggles shall be made manifest in the day of final victory. The word of favour—the deed of kindliness to those who may have been dwelling, as it were, in caves of Adullam, for the Lord's sake, will not be forgotten then, even in the case of those who have shrunk from full identification with the place of suffering and reproach. The efficaciousness of Truth is great, and cannot be destroyed. Its potency will surely reach, in the power of everlasting blessing, even that which stands on the uttermost circle of its influence.

Shall the knowledge of this tempt us to retire into

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greater distance, or to draw nearer to the centre of blessing? The narrative of Ziklag is the record of superabounding grace. May we reverently use it, not to nurture our evil—not to encourage ourselves in forming Ziklags, or in shunning caves of Adullam, but as an incentive to abide in Him: or if we have wandered, to return to Him who upbraideth not for the past — who calleth to honour as well as to blessing.

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IV.

DAVID RESTORING THE ARK.

THE first period in the public life of David, spent for the most part in the dignity of Saul's court, ended, as we have seen, in failure. His faith failed, and he was found a dishonoured exile in the land of the Philistines. Thence, disciplined and humbled, he entered on the second period of his history—a period not spent in kings' courts, but in the wilderness. Yet this period also, though fruitful in many an instance of triumphant faith, ended likewise in sorrowful failure. David was a second time found in the land of the Philistines. His sojourn in the wilderness, just as his residence in the courts of Saul before, ended *there*. Thence, with a heart instructed as it never had been instructed before, he was summoned to enter upon the third period of his eventful history. If he had been disposed to glory in any thing that his energy had effected, or his patience endured, how must every such thought have been silenced, when he remembered the lessons twice taught in Gath of the Philistines!

David had scarcely had time to meditate on the dealing of that hand, which had first, in well-merited chastisement, stripped him of every thing, and then restored to his repentant cry more than it had taken

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away, when tidings suddenly reached him of the fall of Saul, and the disastrous defeat of Israel. Suddenly, he found himself delivered from the greatest of all his enemies—him of whom he had lately said, so mistrustingly: "I shall yet one day perish by his hand." That danger was now gone for ever; the long-expected deliverance was come; yet with accompaniments he had little anticipated. The cup had in it a bitterness which he had not expected. The head of Israel had dishonourably fallen—Jonathan was slain—Israel were in jeopardy. Instead of celebrating his own deliverance, David was constrained to say, "The beauty of Israel is slain * * * tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon: lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.* * * O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished. And David took hold on his clothes, and rent them: and likewise all the men that were with him: they mourned, and wept, and fasted until even, for Saul, and for Jonathan his son, and for the people of the Lord, and for the house of Israel; because they were fallen by the sword."

Such were the circumstances, such the feelings, with which David, after definitely consulting God, returned into the land of Israel. It might have been expected that all Israel would have been ready

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to welcome him. Had it not long ago been declared by the lips of Samuel, that God had forsaken the house of Saul? Had not this been acknowledged by Saul himself? Had not God by the destruction on Gilboa, finally set His seal to the truth of His denunciations? And was it not evident, that the strength and blessing that had departed from Saul, had accompanied the dishonoured sojourn of David in the wilderness? The might of Israel was there. There were they who were able to break through the host of the Philistines, and to draw from the well of Bethlehem, when Bethlehem and its waters were in the grasp of the enemy. There too, was the Psalmody of Israel. And yet, despite of every indication that God had given — careless alike of the tokens of His favour towards David, and of His displeasure towards themselves—the tribes of Israel continued to reject the chosen servant of God; and Judah only welcomed him. The son of Saul, though feeble and unknown, was preferred to David; and David left the wilderness, only to be engaged in a long and destructive struggle with those who should have welcomed him as the gift of God for their blessing. So slowly does the hand of God effectuate its purposes—so resolute are men in refusing to recognise any thing save that which gratifies the tendencies of their nature, or approves itself to the calculations of their self-interest. For seven years and six months, Abner and all the tribes of Israel fiercely assailed David: and yet afterwards, they were not ashamed to confess, that they knew that

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David was he whom God had destined to be the deliverer of Israel. They knew this, and yet for seven years they sought to destroy him; and no doubt, all the while, spoke of themselves, and were spoken of by others, as conscientious men fulfilling an apprehended duty in adhering to the house of Saul. So easy is it to speak well of evil, and to encourage iniquity by smooth words of falsehood.

At last, however, God accomplished the long cherished desire of His servant's heart—the desire that He had Himself implanted—and David became the head and governor of Israel. The capture of the citadel of Zion, which till then had never been wrested from the foe, made him the virtual founder of Jerusalem; and undisputed supremacy began for the first time to attach to the people of God.

But of what value is strength, unless thoroughly subjected to God, and made the servant of His order, and of His truth? David well knew that Israel could only regulate others for blessing, in proportion as they themselves were regulated by God. To be legislated for by God, was the distinctive privilege of Israel. It was theirs to say of Him, "*my King* as well as my God." What then was the condition in which David found the order of Israel? Was Israel really subject to the arrangements of God?

The condition of Israel's order was mainly determined by their relation to the Tabernacle and its vessels, especially their relations to the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was the especial emblem of

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God's own presence. Containing within itself the Tables written by the finger of God—covered by the mercy-seat, and overshadowed by the cherubim, it was at once the symbol of the holiness, and of the mercy, and of the almighty power of God, combined on behalf of His people. Accordingly, the place of His visible presence was the expiation-seat* between the cherubim of glory. There He was to be known; there worshipped; thence He was wont to watch over and direct Israel.

When Israel were in their journeys in the wilderness, the Ark preceded them. It penetrated the desert before them, "to seek out a resting place for them." When it advanced, they advanced; when it rested, they rested. "When the Ark set forward, Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel." Again, when Canaan was to be entered, it was the Ark that went down into the depths of Jordan, and divided its waters for the steps of Israel. "The priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan." And once more, when Jericho was to be destroyed, the Ark of the Covenant compassed the city seven days,

* An expression to be preferred to mercy-seat. Mercy is one thing; mercy based on accepted expiation is another.

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until the walls fell before it. So entirely was the exercise of the guiding and protective power of God associated with the Ark of His Covenant.

When the Ark rested, its proper place was the Tabernacle. There in their respective courts stood the altars: *there* were set the various vessels of ministration in their right relation to each other, and to the expiation-seat—all being necessary to the right order of Israel's worship, and of Israel's instruction. It is true indeed, that the presence of the Ark any where in Israel, was an evidence of God being near them, but God could not be worshipped in the appointed manner, nor could the order of His Truth be maintained, or His mercies be made manifest in giving rest and peace unto His people, unless the Ark was in the sanctuary with the expiation-seat placed over it as its covering. Then, the appointed services of the Levites and the Priests could be performed after the manner: but could they worship when there was no mercy-seat sprinkled with expiatory blood? The mere fact of the Ark being in the midst of Israel, was a proof that God had not forsaken His people; but it was no proof that His order and His ways were being recognised and obeyed. The Ark had been in the midst of Israel during the whole of Saul's evil reign, and abundant evidence was afforded that God had not forsaken Israel. David's own preservation was one abiding proof. Yet, notwithstanding all individual instances of Divine blessing found throughout Israel, what was become of the order of Israel's worship,

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and of Israel's instruction as a whole? The fallen Tabernacle—the scattered vessels of ministration—the isolation of the Ark in an unknown dwelling—its separation from the expiation-seat—were sufficient indications that Truth and the order thereof, had indeed fallen. Can we trace in these things no typical likeness to the days in which we live? Are we living at an hour when the truths of God are maintained in their completeness, and in their right connections; or are they held partially, confusedly, detachedly, and out of their right relations to each other—many despised—many lost? And yet, who cares for these things? Men say, Is not God yet amongst us? Are not souls still saved by His grace? Why then should we concern ourselves about His order, or the more minute knowledge of His truth?

Throughout the reign of Saul — that period during which nature, not faith, directed the energies of Israel — the Ark was not only kept in separation from all the other vessels of the Tabernacle, but even in its isolation, it was neglected and dishonoured. It still remained the especial witness of God's presence, and of God's glory, where He might be consulted, and, in a measure at least, honoured. But it was not sought unto. Israel inquired not at it during the days of Saul. (1 Chr. xiii. 3.)

It was the sense of this that chiefly acted on the soul of David. He does not appear to have considered so much the absence of right relations between the Ark and the other vessels of the Taber-

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nacle, as to have been struck by the more palpable and astounding fact of the want of *all* right relation between the Ark and Israel. Many years had passed since the wickedness of Israel, and Israel's priests had caused the Ark to be carried captive into the land of the Philistines. God indeed, would not permit it to remain there. By the special interference of His own providential power, He soon brought it back into the coasts of Israel again. But there, on the outskirts of Israel it remained, abandoned, and almost forgotten; though still refusing, in its own long-suffering mercy, to forsake the people by whom it was despised.

To bring back therefore the Ark from the place of its dishonour; to bring it again into the bosom of Israel; to make it once more that which Israel should seek unto and enquire at: and above all, to establish it in the citadel of Zion, the place of sovereign supremacy and strength; these were the immediate objects of David's desires. Herein he was fulfilling his office of king, in giving supremacy to God and to His truth.

But the servants of God have not unfrequently to learn, that the pursuit of a right end, does not necessarily imply the employment of right means. Indeed, after a long season of departure from the ways of God, if a sense of the value of that which sin has forfeited bursts suddenly on the soul, it is likely that the human heart would rush with inconsiderate haste to recover the privileges it has lost; not remembering that if we are required to regard

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the appointments of God in respect of the end to be pursued, we have to regard them no less in respect of the means to be employed in the attainment of that end. This David proved. It seemed easy to him, and to the elders of Israel to move the Ark of God to its new habitation. The desire was holy; the object right; and they fully reckoned on the instant and unhindered blessing of God. A cart was prepared; oxen were yoked to it; the Ark of God was placed thereon; and one whom they appointed amongst themselves drave the oxen. Was it because oxen, secretly guided by the providence of God, had once brought back the Ark in safety from the land of the Philistines, that therefore they expected oxen, prepared and guided by the unbidden hand of man, to accomplish a similar end? The ordinance of God was express, that none but Priests and Levites should handle the vessels of the sanctuary: and although God, when the sin of Israel had brought the Ark into the land of the Philistines, where there were no Levites, no Priests, was at liberty to supersede His own ordinances, yet David was not God. It was not for David to forget (especially when seeking to restore the order of Israel) that God had commanded that His Ark should not be moved, save after an appointed manner. But it *was* forgotten. The ordinance of God was carelessly transgressed, and what was the result? The oxen stumbled; the Ark was endangered; Uzzah touched it, and was destroyed; David was angry; and the Ark proceeded no further: until at last, repenting

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of his error, and of his anger, David assembled the house of Aaron and the Levites, in God's appointed way, and therefore under God's sanction, and with God's blessing, bore the Ark to its destined place in Zion.

David indeed might well humble himself because of his error: for what error could be greater than recklessly to transgress the solemn ordinance of God, who had said that none but Priests and Levites should touch the things of His sanctuary? Yet, has Christianity afforded no instances of similar transgression?

None, I trust, who read these pages, will imagine that I mean that there are now in the Church of God, any who stand to it in the same relation as that in which the priestly family stood to Israel. Whom did that priestly body typify? They typified the *whole* Church of God; for it is written of *all* believers, that they are Priests (Rev. i.)—"a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ." The outward ceremonies by which those typical Priests were separated, when they were sprinkled with blood, and anointed with oil, were but shadows of that better blood, and more excellent oil—even the unction from above, by which the true Priests of God are consecrated unto Him for ever. Mistake on this subject is fatal; for it puts the shadow for the substance. It confounds that which was given for typical purposes in the power of a fleshly commandment, with that which is esta-

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blished anti-typically in the power of an endless life.

David infringed the typical order of God, and was punished: but how much sorer punishment do *we* deserve if we subvert the anti-typical reality—if we raise the unsanctified and the unbelieving, those who fear not God and know not Christ, into functions which belong only to those who have truly the grace of His Spirit. Yet, can we say that Christianity has not been guilty of this sin? The Protestant Reformation was a time of peculiar intervention from the hand of God in mercy. Never since the Apostles died, has there been a period when the Spirit of God worked so effectually in unmasking error and disinterring Truth. But when light is sent from God, however clear it may be, or however precious, it is sure to encounter the obstructions of our evil: and unless these obstructions are, by sovereign grace, swept away, disastrous consequences will follow. Our evil, even if it succeed not in destroying the good, will nevertheless pervert it, and mar the work of God. The origin of the Reformation was markedly from God: but its developments were permitted to fall into the hands of men. Expediency assumed the helm, and compromise upon compromise followed. Principles were valued, because of their practicability, not because of their truth. Unconverted men were placed where none but Christ's true servants had a title to stand. The world again assumed the garments of the Church; and the enemies of the Truth, seeing how

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many parts in the walls of Protestantism were built with untempered mortar, congratulated themselves as to the future, and waited for that time of assault which has since come.

They who show by their words and by their ways, that they do not truly receive the message that God has sent respecting His Son, and who shrink from the due confession of His name, cannot either worship or serve God acceptably. They who believe, and with their mouth confess—such only shall be saved; such only are Priests of God. Any arrangement for the order of God's Church that is not based upon this primary and axiomatic truth must be plain disobedience to Him. But even where this has been remembered, it has not unfrequently been forgotten, that although all believers are both Priests and Levites (all having the title to worship God in equal nearness and within the same holy Courts) yet nevertheless, all Priests and Levites had not the same office. Their employments were diverse; their duties various. They formed one body; but to each was assigned his own peculiar function. It is not otherwise in the Church of God. All are not pastors, or evangelists, or teachers, or rulers. Each member in the body of Christ has his own proper duties; his own gifts. In proportion as these are discerned, and recognised, there is order: but if under pretence of rejecting the self-devised appointments of men, the true ministerial order of God is neglected or despised, the same evil confusion and strife are introduced into the Church,

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with which revolutionary wickedness is seeking to deluge the world.

But to return to David. There was no visible glory; no manifestation of the Divine presence, whilst David was restoring to Israel the long-banished Ark of the Covenant of their God. It was not as when in the days of Moses the cloud rested on the Tabernacle; or as when fire descended from Heaven, and consumed the sacrifices of the altar. It was the restoration of Israel to the place of forfeited privilege—the return of the Ark from the place of neglect and dishonour. Gladness, indeed, *but humiliation also*, became such a day; and David felt it so. He laid aside every emblem of warlike might, although his conflicts had been the instrumental means of this day of triumph: he laid aside his crown, and all tokens of his royal estate, although, as King of Israel, he was effecting these things for God. He laid aside all emblems of greatness, and clothed in a linen ephod, danced, with uncovered head, before the Ark. The very fact that his agency had been so markedly employed, and that the hand of God (as is usual in seasons of His people's weakness) had concealed itself, and wrought secretly through him, made it the more needful, when the day of blessing came, that David should seem as nothing, and that God alone should be exalted. If it had been a day in which God was visibly manifesting His own glory, there would have been no danger of David's being regarded unduly, even if all the splendour of Israel's glory had been

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gathered around his person—for what is man in the presence of the glory of God? But it was otherwise when that glory was hidden—hidden because of Israel's sin; and when the solitary Ark, long exiled from the Tabernacle of God, was the lowly emblem of God's presence in the midst of His repentant people. The eye of faith could discern the blessedness of that hour; but the heart of the daughter of Saul, true to her lineage, saw no excellency in it. She beheld the joy of David, but, Nabal-like, she understood it not. She despised and upbraided him, and found in the day of Israel's blessing, a day of sorrow and lasting chastisement to herself. "Therefore Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no child unto the day of her death."

We have authority from Scripture for saying, that the things which happened to Israel, happened unto them for ensamples, and are written for our admonition. (1 Cor. x.) They who read the Old Testament Scriptures, remembering this, will be able to trace many a feature in the general aspect of Christianity that too closely resembles the condition of Israel at the time of which we have been speaking. How often, for example, do Christians seek to deaden their apprehension of the disorder and dereliction of truth that prevails around them, by the reflection that God has not forsaken, and never will forsake his own people; just as Israel might have said, in the days of Saul, "Is not the Ark yet amongst us?" It is indeed, most true, that God will not forsake his people; but is

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preservation from final ruin, and deliverance from the extreme effects of disobedience, the only thing that is to be desired by the Church of God? Have they no distinctive testimony to maintain — no banner to display, because of God's truth? Is there no directive efficacy in His principles — no thing that forms the character, and determines the path of those who are subject to their power? If His principles be amongst us, and we regard them not, what can we expect, but that it should be said of us, as it was said of Israel, "that truth has fallen in the streets, and equity cannot enter."

Indeed, from the moment the Apostles died, the features of the days of Saul have been abundantly marked on the history of Christianity. From that time forward, the directive energy that has since given to Christianity its character in the earth, ceased to be of God. "Until the time of Trajan," says Hegesippus,* "the Church remained as a virgin pure and uncorrupt; but when the sacred band of the Apostles died, and when that generation which had been permitted to hear with their own ears the words of inspired wisdom had passed away, then the conspiracy of godless error commenced its course, through the deceiving agency of other teachers, who, seeing that none of the Apostles were left, began from that time forth with open face to set up in rivalry to the truth the preaching of knowledge falsely so called." The principles of the days of Constantine, favoured even by real Chris-

* Hegesippus died about A.D. 180.

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tians, and those of that later era when ecclesiastical Rome consolidated her corruptions, evidence the effects of that corruption, the rise of which Hegesippus saw. And if ever any true energy of faith has appeared, refusing to bow to the dominant power of evil, the cave of Adullam has been its virtual dwelling-place. Elsewhere it has found only that which is intolerant and repellent of truth.

There may indeed have been periods in the history of Christianity, such for example as the Protestant Reformation, when the revived energy of God's people seeking to re-establish the supremacy of truth, may have reminded us of the days of David, when he sought to bring back the Ark, and to establish it in Zion. No one, who understands and values the truth of the Gospel, can doubt that the Reformation was from God. But the finest gold may become dim: the stream of purest origin may be fouled in its course. Kings and unregenerate nations, and pastors ordained humanly, but not by God, were not, as I have already said, fit instruments whereby to rescue the truth of God from the grasp of the enemy, and to restore it to its citadel of strength. It is no marvel therefore, that God should have refused to commit His truth to such care as this. The oxen have, as it were, again stumbled; and whilst many a daring hand has been eagerly stretched out to uphold the tottering Ark, faith sees that the blessing of God is not there, and turns from the busy but unprospered throng.

Levites and Priests outwardly, there are none;

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but Levites and Priests spiritually there are, for there is still the power of accepted service—still the power of accepted worship. Wherever the name and the work of the Lord Jesus is confessed according to the Scriptures of God, *there* does His Holy Spirit dwell: there, and there only, is found the separation of the Levite, and the anointing of the Priest; there only are they who have title to handle the vessels of the sanctuary. But where are they? They are scattered — and where among men is he who can assemble them? Where is that kingly spirit of faith that could lead them if assembled? Where is he, who like David, would dance before the Ark, and forget his own exaltation? Indeed, has not the spirit of service and the spirit of worship waxed feeble? Do not the Levites and Priests themselves slumber?

There may indeed have been individuals, who, acting on limited and comparatively private spheres, have mourned over the fall of truth, and have sought, as far as in them lay, its restitution to supremacy and honour. But a pebble cast into the tempest-tossed ocean produces no appreciable effect on its raging floods. Without a sound being heard, or a ripple being seen, it sinks unnoticed in the whirl of waters. Not indeed that any labour is in vain in the Lord. He who putteth the tears of His saints into His bottle, notes in the book of His remembrance their most trivial service, and in the day which shall disclose, not results of service merely, but counsels of the heart, the feeblest effort

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of faith shall not lose its reward. "Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy, for thou renderest to every man according to his work." But whatever acts of hidden individual faithfulness there may have been, known only to God, *we* can speak only of such things as have been ostensible; and where, since the corruptions of Christianity commenced, can we point out any general movement, even among God's own people, that has not been manifestly defective, not only in the selection of the instrumental means of action, but also in a right apprehension of the truth itself? Not unfrequently, union for practical purposes has been attempted, apart from the truth of God as revealed by His Apostles and Prophets; which is, as if Israel had sought confederation apart from the Ark and the Tabernacle. What wonder, therefore, if there has been failure in result? There can be no *practical* union of counsel or of effort, apart from the regulating power of God's revealed truth. By it, and for it, His Spirit acts. Activity apart from it must be the activity of the mind and will of man.

When, therefore, we read of the triumph and exceeding joy with which David, and all Israel with him, brought up the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord to Zion, "with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps," if we ask ourselves what these things indicate, we are obliged to look on to a yet future hour, when a greater than David — One whom David feebly

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typified, will, as one of the results of His own conflicts, give rest, and establishment, and supremacy, to the long scorned and persecuted Truth. Else, what could be the meaning of the words, with which David, by the inspiration of God, celebrated the establishment of the Ark in Zion? "Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice: and let men say among the nations, The Lord reigneth. Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof: let the fields rejoice, and all that is therein. Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the Lord, because He cometh to judge the earth. O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever. And say ye, Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the Gentiles, that we may give thanks to thy holy name, and glory in thy praise." The condition of Israel, and the condition of the earth at present, stand in sorrowful contrast with these words of blessing. Vain words indeed, unless referable to that coming hour, when Christ shall give to Truth its everlasting supremacy, and when it shall be said in Heaven and in earth, "The sovereignty of the world hath become the sovereignty of our Lord and of His Christ." Till then, truth will not triumph—till then, the servants of God must be content to know the affliction and endurance of the kingdom of Jesus. Nevertheless, the time is drawing nigh, when that typical hour of David's joy is to be accomplished in that final day of triumph, when the Psalms of Israel on earth shall unite with

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the halleluiahs of the redeemed above in saying, "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth." For that hour we wait, as those who have been alike made Levites — Priests — Kings; able therefore to serve, to worship, and to contend for Him, during the time of His people's weakness, and of His truth's dishonour, yet expecting no triumph until that day.*

* Lest my frequent reference to Levitical ceremonies in this paper should be at all misunderstood, I will take this opportunity of saying, that I consider that few things have occurred in the history of Christianity more fearful in their character than the attempts that have been lately made to introduce typical ceremonies, under the pretence of encouraging "æsthetic religion," *i. e.* a religion addressed to the senses—valuable, says the Bishop of London, in itself, but to be avoided at present, lest it should offend weak brethren!! Latitudinarianism too, though on different grounds, favours it, as may be seen in a sermon lately preached by Professor Powell, before the University of Oxford. [This was written in 1853.]

Ceremonies indeed, *when divinely appointed*, are, like every other ordinance of God, to be received with reverence. But what presumption can be greater than to invent typical ceremonies for ourselves! Such ceremonies are too momentously important in their effects for the appointment of them to be intrusted to any one excepting God.

Accordingly, these invented ceremonies, so far from embodying the truths of our holy faith, will be found in direct opposition thereunto. Take two prominent instances. Barriers —in some cases, gates of brass, have been set up in order to exclude all but the so-called Priests (ἱερεῖς) from the pretended Holy of Holies. What is this but a contemptuous annihilation of the Epistle to the Hebrews? Are we not there taught that all Believers are, as accepted and perfected worshippers, admitted into the true sanctuary—not indeed, earthly places made with hands, but Heaven itself? And is

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Yet though we expect no triumph *now*, we nevertheless cease not to labour. "Blessed are they that sow beside all waters." If we take good heed to the character of the seed sown, we may leave in God's hands the results of the sowing.

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not the removal of every barrier made one of the primary points in the Apostle's instruction?

Again, the Table of the Lord is turned into an Altar. Now it is true that the Table of the Lord does stand in a certain relation to an Altar: so that if there had been no Altar, there could have been no Table: but that very relation shows that the Table is not an Altar. The relation is thus illustrated by St. Paul himself. When the Jewish peace-sacrifice was presented to God, part of it was burned on His Altar; but part was allowed to be taken by the worshipper himself. A Table was spread, apart from the Altar, and that Table was furnished by those parts of the sacrifice which had so been taken away. God, therefore, supplied the Table as from His own Altar; but that Table was not an Altar; it was positively contrasted with it. It could not indeed have existed, unless the claim of the Altar had been first satisfied; but so far from being the same thing as the Altar, what could be more contrasted?—for the direction of the Altar was *towards God*, from earth to Heaven; whereas, the direction of the Table was *from* God *towards* the worshipper—from Heaven towards those who were in the earth. Its object was to feed and strengthen the worshipper, not to satisfy God. The relation of the Lord's Table to the Cross is analogous. The Cross is the Altar: there the Sacrifice was once and for ever offered unto God. Thence, He spreads a Table, in connection with that Altar, and supplies it with continued memorials of that one sacrifice. But this, as well as every other truth with which it tampers, æsthetic religion subverts; and by re-instituting an Altar, declares that the Sacrifice of Christ is not finished, and nullifies the one atonement for the remission of sins.

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V.

ABSALOM.

THE reign of David (and in this it contrasts with that of Solomon) was a continued conflict with enemies. Supremacy maintained against restless adversaries is a far different thing from the peaceful supremacy of undisputed power. The former was the allotment of David: *he* had to struggle with enemies who were still lifting up the head; but to Solomon, from the beginning, was granted rest. He rested in his royal house, and peacefully led the worship of Israel in the Temple of God. Thus Christ has first to conquer enemies, before He reigns, with all things brought under His feet.

To act therefore, as if the day of Solomon had come, before the day of David had ended, must have been disobedience to the appointments of God. Yet this David did, when, "*at the time when kings go forth to battle*," he tarried still at Jerusalem. There resting in his palace, whilst the armies of Israel were in the field, he arose at evening-tide from his couch, to walk on the roof of his kingly house — a strange occupation for one who was called to be in the battle-field as Captain of the host of the Lord. Due and proper rest, indeed, is not denied to the servants of the Lord; there is a time to rest, and a

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time to cease from resting: and this David knew. The sin of David was, not in that he rested, but that he rested when kings were going forth to battle. The consequence was that temptation came, and he fell into the greatest of his transgressions.

The sins of God's servants would not have been recorded, save for the instruction of others; and the scope of the lesson is often wider than we suppose. What has marked the history of Judaism and of Christianity too, save perpetual attempts to gain to themselves allegiance and affections that are elsewhere due? Nor have they ever hesitated to stretch forth the hand of destruction against Christ, or His truth, or His people, when they have deemed it expedient, either for the prosecution of their schemes of aggrandisement, or for the concealment of their deeds of abomination. Christianity early desired to reign: it early shunned the trial of conflict, and sought for itself unhallowed rest. It gained that rest; and has there sought to attract to itself the affections, and to secure the obedience of the Bride of Christ; and has indeed fearfully succeeded. Many a time has the energy of Christianity been put forth to draw the affections of the Church astray. Many a time has it exerted its power to crush Christ, as seen in His people and in His truth, lest the presence of light should expose and condemn its iniquity. It was for this that David stretched out his hand against Uriah. Uriah means "the light of God." The energies of God's own people, directed, as they often have been, by Satan, have

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frequently been employed in quenching the light of God.

Great as was David's sin, he repented, and was forgiven. The depth of his anguish, and the reality of his repentance may be seen in the 51st Psalm. "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness: that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice." His cry was heard, and he was enabled experimentally to declare the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works, saying, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." The mercy shown to David, stands as a memorial, for which myriads have had, and will have, to bless God for ever and ever. "For this" [that is, because of the mercy shown to me] "shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: * * * Thou art my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble: thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance."

Nevertheless, although his sin was forgiven, so that he should not die, and although sustainment and consolation were never withdrawn from him in his sorrows, yet the honour of God's name required that such transgression as David's should be

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marked by no ordinary tokens of His displeasure: and this was the more needful, in a dispensation which derived its ostensible character from the strict righteousness of the Law of Sinai, rather than from the truth and grace of Zion. Accordingly, chastisement was instantly sent; nor did sorrow ever after leave the house of David. "Behold, said the Lord, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house * * * the sword shall never depart from thine house."

Old age had fallen upon David before the heaviest of these inflictions came, in the rebellion of Absalom his son. Absalom was the son of Maacah the daughter of Talmai, king of Geshur. David apparently became first connected with Geshur during his abode at Ziklag. Geshur was one of the places which he assailed when he attacked the Amalekites. "And David and his men went up and invaded the Geshurites, and the Gezrites, and the Amalekites: for those nations were of old the inhabitants of the land, as thou goest to Shur, even unto the land of Egypt." Now Israel was forbidden to marry to themselves wives from these nations. "Thou shalt not make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son." Here then, apparently, was one of the results of his sojourn in Ziklag. Except for that sojourn, David probably would never have known Maacah the Geshurite. However, he took her to be his wife.

To Maacah were born Tamar and Absalom. Both

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were fair; both attractive. "In all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him." David probably was proud of the attractiveness which adorned his house, and was willing to forget the source from which it sprang. The attractiveness wrought its effects; and as might be expected from the attractiveness of nature, the resulting consequences were sin and sorrow. The beauty of Tamar was the cause of sin and destruction to Amnon, who fell beneath the revengeful hand of Absalom his brother; and the attractiveness of Absalom wrought on the hearts of the men of Israel, till they were drawn away from David and his throne. Such were the results of an attractiveness, derived from sources foreign and forbidden to God's people. Has Christianity profited by the lesson, or has it also formed alliances with the stranger?

Absalom, afraid of David's displeasure, fled to Geshur; the place of his Gentile origin, and there abode three years. There he might fitly have remained; but the weak heart of David, wrought on probably by the self-same attractiveness, yearned after Absalom. Joab and others observed this, and contrived his restitution. He *was* restored with a heart unhumbled and unrepentant, to become yet more distinctly, a scourge to his father's house.

Nothing is more blessed, nothing more according to God, than love and grace exercised towards an humbled and repentant heart. "If thy brother

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trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him." But if he refuse to repent; if he continue in frowardness and evil, there is no place for the *manifestation* of forgiveness —no room for the *development* of kindness and love. To attempt to exercise it under such circumstances is weakness and sin.

When David was persuaded to restore Absalom there were no tokens of repentance. We read of David's soul longing to go forth unto Absalom, but not of Absalom's soul longing to go forth unto David. When he was at last introduced to the King, we hear of his doing obeisance, and receiving the kiss of peace; but not one word of confession was uttered by his lips. God had not commanded his restoration. It was contrived by Joab, that subtle man of expediency, and by Joab's instrument—the wise woman of Tekoah. Thence came the wisdom, which, acting skilfully on the nature of David, persuaded him to restore his proud and traitorous son; one who had spent the three years of his sojourn in his Gentile home in conceiving plans of evil, which he now returned into the bosom of Israel to mature.

Absalom was not less quick than Joab to discern the fond attachment of David, and skilfully availed himself of his father's weakness. Unauthorised by the King, and yet not forbidden, he prepared for himself chariots and horses to run before him. A standing such as belonged to no other in Israel was

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thus at once given to Absalom; and finding himself unchecked by the King, he went on to avail himself of his position to seduce the hearts of the people. He was wont to rise up early, and to stand "beside the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the King for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel. And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the King to hear thee. Absalom said moreover, Oh that I were made judge in the land, that every man which hath any suit or cause, might come unto me, and I would do him justice! And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. And in this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the King for judgment. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel." Much probably that Absalom said was true. The disorders and sorrows of David's house had no doubt borne heavily on David. His energies, therefore, had become enfeebled: and the influence of his Throne had proportionally waned. His death-bed words sufficiently indicate that he had found it no easy thing to rule. "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God: and he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." Such is the character,

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such the results of the government of a perfect King. But it had been otherwise with David. "My house," said he, "is not so with God." God's eye saw this, and it pitied: Absalom's eye, quickened by Satan, saw it too, but it moved no pity in him. He rejoiced in beholding it—he rejoiced in exposing it—he longed that it might be increased, not lessened. He who designs to seduce the people of God can desire nothing so much as flaws in their government, and weakness in their leaders. The arrow that is directed against weakness may come from the quiver of truth, and therefore may seem to be of God; and yet the hand that sends it may be strengthened and stimulated by the very energy of hell. So was it with Absalom. He discerned failure in David's house; he saw that others discerned it; the occasion was just that which he desired; he pointed out to Israel evils that David had failed to rectify—depreciated David—extolled himself, and Israel received him as "a father of peace" unto them.

Yet David had cherished Absalom. There indeed was one of the chief failures of David as King. He knew that Absalom was thus exalting himself. He knew that the calling of God was not with Absalom, but with another. He knew that Absalom was not of faith: he saw that nature ruled in him, and in his ways: and yet, though knowing all this, he interfered not to restrain him, but knowingly cherished this viper in his bosom.

Living as we now do, at a period when the

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results of the past failures of Christianity are teeming around us on every side, and when the best energies of the real Church are enfeebled, and worse than enfeebled, by internal and external evil, we may discern in this relation of David to Absalom a lesson for ourselves. The Church of God long ago chose to unite themselves with things from which God designed to separate them by everlasting barriers. They have cherished among themselves plants of foreign growth—plants, not of the garden of God. They have rejoiced in their luxuriance, and admired their beauty; and have contrasted the vigour of those plants with the sickliness of other plants, which seem to wither, though they belong to God. What wonder then if we should now hear it said by many a mouth, that Christ's truth has failed to give what it promised, and that therefore, other instrumentality must be sought. The ruin and weakness, and division of the people of God is discerned and magnified; and whilst truth seems to have lost all power of systematic influence, Satan is preparing another system, fair, liberal, philanthropic, and more attractive than Absalom in the eyes of men—a system that promises to the nations and to the Church, a peace which the truth of Christ in the hands of his servants has failed to give. Natural principles, which are but infidelity in disguise, are fast supplanting the last rays of revealed truth whose light has lingered in the consciences of men; and

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other lights — false lights, are being given, by which they will amuse themselves, and at which they will warm themselves, rejoicing in sparks of their own kindling, until at last, all truth having been surrendered, "strong delusion shall be sent, that they should believe a lie." *

There was no occasion in the life of David, of such deep and accumulated sorrow, as when he fled from the face of Absalom his son. The throne of Israel had been to him God's special gift. He had

* It has been said, that the tendency of an age may be judged of from its popular poetry. Read then, the following lines of the most popular poet of the day :—

"Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light :
The year is dying in the night,
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out *a slowly dying cause*,
And ancient forms of party strife ;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand,
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in *the Christ that is to be*."

The "slowly dying cause" is evidently that of "creed-Christianity"—under which name is really comprehended (as far as the feelings of such writers are concerned) "the faith once delivered to the Saints." Their "coming man" is Anti-christ—their panacea, the extirpation of God's revealed truth. Their desires will be accomplished—"we have heard that THE Antichrist shall come."

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reached it through years of trial and conflict; and he had valued it as an instrument for serving God's people. But now, he had to struggle for it again, not with Saul, or with Philistines, but with his own son—the son whom he had loved, admired, and cherished. A remembrance of the transgression which had first caused the sword to be sent upon his house, and a sense of the long-continued weakness, which had marked his own government, must have weighed heavily on his spirit. The Mount of Olives, that Mount which has been so often the place of the sorrows of God's servants, even as it will by and by evidence their glory, (see Zech. xiv. 4,) witnessed the bitterness of his sorrow. "And David went up by the ascent of Mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered: and he went barefoot: and all the people that were with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up." Nor was the humiliation of his heart less deep, or less manifested than his sorrow. Shimei who was of the house of Saul, came out to meet him, and cursed still as he came, saying, "Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial * * * the Lord hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and behold, thou art taken in thy mischief, because thou art a bloody man." Such were the words of Shimei, but David resisted not; he meekly bowed to the reproach, and said, "Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life; how much more may this Benjamite do it? Let him alone, and let him

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curse; for the Lord hath bidden him. It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day." And when the Ark of the Covenant of God was brought, David said to them that brought it, "Carry back the Ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again, and shew me both it, and His habitation. But if He thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him." He was willing to stand in apparent separation from God, and in apparent subjection to His curse; for such separation, and such curse were not more than he had deserved. He knew also, that if there were any place in which he could be helped in consistency with God's glory, *that* place was one of lowest humiliation. Besides, it was the place in which he could most fitly exercise faith towards God, and cry to Him for deliverance.

He *did* look to God; he *did* cry to Him and His cry was not in vain. Among all the Psalms of David, there is none which more remarkably evidences the triumph of his faith out of depths of affliction and chastisement, than the Psalm which he spake whilst flying "from the face of Absalom his son." There was no unconsciousness of the circumstances—no want of appreciation of the greatness of the danger—for he said, "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me? Many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my

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soul, There is no help for him in God." Yet, in spite of the words of denunciation, or of despair, thus sounded in his ears by countless tongues, David was still enabled, even as in his earlier years, to encourage himself in God. He trusted in God, not merely as a protector, but as One who would again restore him to the dignity and honour of His service. "But thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; *my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.*" Though the dangers were still present, yet in faith he spoke of them as past — the deliverance was future, yet he spoke of it as already come; nor did the near presence of the danger take from him the sweetness of present rest. "I laid me down and slept; I waked; for the Lord sustained me. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone, thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: thy blessing is upon thy people." Such was the expression of the calm confidence of David, even whilst multiplied dangers were still gathering around him, and whilst the tear was yet falling from his eye. Nor was his confidence in vain. He was restored and allowed again to see Israel in peace—again to prove that God's blessing is upon His people. How precious is the individual use of such a Psalm as this, to every one who, after having backslidden or trespassed, has humbly turned again to the mercies and faithfulness of

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God. Even though the tokens of divine rebuke and chastisement be present on every side, even though every tongue may say, "there is no help for him in God," such an one may remember David, and again say, "Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me: my glory, and the lifter up of mine head." Thus, even the sins and chastisements of God's servants are made blessings in result to His people. Their record becomes the means of restoring or strengthening the links which bind to Him in mercy, and grace, and peace for ever.

There is, unquestionably, a time coming, when the value of this Psalm will be peculiarly appreciated by some, at least, among those who are, or who will be directing the energies of the Church of God. He must indeed be blind to the signs of the times, who does not discover that the foul stains that rest on the history of professing Christianity, and the want of energy and truth, and union amongst those who are really under its vital power, are producing in the minds of men an avowed hostility to the thought of making Divine Truth even the professed object of their search, much less the centre of their combinations. Truth, so far as it has been used by men for purposes of government in the earth, has been found productive of so many difficulties, and has led to so many inconsistencies, that very many of those who are concerned in regulating the institutions of society, are becoming most anxious to exclude Christ's truth

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from the governmental arrangements of the earth. Civilisation, science, art, the brotherhood of man as man, philanthropic associations based on the common interests of humanity, these and such like things are looked to, as affording new principles, new habits of thought and action, whereby society may be moulded anew, to the exclusion of that supremacy which has hitherto been supposed to be due, in name at least, to the truth of Christ. Many a real Christian is at this moment disseminating books, and encouraging principles, the effects of which are as thoroughly adverse to the due supremacy of Christ, and of His truth, as the fair and flattering words of Absalom, during the years of his insidious murmurings, were adverse to the stability of David's throne. The time will come when the effects of these things will be manifested, and Christianity become in relation to the most civilised and most influential regions of the earth, as the woman in the Revelation, driven into the wilderness by the fury of the ten-horned Dragon. (See Rev. xii.) Then, they who have chiefly guided the energies of the Church, will have indeed reason to weep, and to confess that their forefathers and themselves have, in many ways, greatly erred. In many things they will have to feel that the iniquity of their heels is compassing them round about. Nevertheless, the use of this Psalm, through God's abounding grace, will still be open to them; and some no doubt will use it —use it with a living sense of its blessedness, and like David, encourage themselves in God.

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Nevertheless they must not expect similar deliverance *here*. As I have before said, the period of David was one in which God was avowedly subduing all enemies, and remedying all failures among His servants, in order that He might in Solomon, the Prince of Peace, afford the great appointed type of those blessings, which, in Another greater than Solomon, He will finally secure to all His people. But it is otherwise now. The *manifested* dealings of God with Israel and the earth are for the present stayed. Evil is for a season allowed to progress towards its end; until at last, the throne of that Wicked One will be set, who will establish mischief as by a law. Under such circumstances, the people of God may indeed say to Him in faith, "Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory and the lifter up of mine head," but they are words which must be used in *patient* faith; for the "lifting up" of the scattered and fallen Church will not be now. It is reserved for that hour when the day-star shall at length arise upon the dark and troubled scene of conflict and woe, and usher in the day of everlasting triumph. Then, indeed, no element of joy will be wanting to the cup of gladness. Then it will be said understandingly, both in earth and heaven, "O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth for ever."

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VI.

ZIBA—MEPHIBOSHETH.

THE faith of David and his submission to the will of God, shone like a heavenly light in the midst of the deep darkness of this, his last great affliction. Nor was his meekness the only token of God's presence in blessing. There were some around David who were enabled to view his circumstances with the eye of faith. They saw him weak — dishonoured — chastened; but they still recognised him to be the servant of God. They resolved therefore, whilst others turned away, to cleave to him the more closely, and unreservedly to share his destinies. David urged them to leave him; but they steadfastly refused. They would not add to the sorrow of one whom God loved, even though he was stricken. They would not abandon him who was still the king of Israel, even though for the present, his place was a wilderness, and not a throne.

Seldom, however, does the providence of God open any peculiar sphere to the faith, or service of His children, without an agent of Satan being prepared to introduce some element of evil whereby

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the perfectness of the service is marred, or its efficacy hindered. Among those who acknowledged David in the day of his calamity, there was one who seemed to surpass all others in kindness and in liberality. This was Ziba, the servant of Mephibosheth, the grandson of Saul. Anxious apparently for the comfort of David and his band, Ziba met them with asses saddled, and bread, and raisins, and wine: and when David said, "What meanest thou by these?" Ziba answered and said, "The asses be for the king's household to ride on; and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat, and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink. And the king said, And where is thy master's son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, To-day shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father."

"A wicked man," saith the Scripture, "taketh a gift out of his bosom to pervert the ways of judgment." It is true indeed, that David did not *know* that Ziba was wicked. His unexpected kindness came at a time when almost every other hand was either paralysed by terror, or else armed against him in active enmity. No doubt at such a moment, it required great self-possession to pause, and to withhold the tongue from rashly pronouncing judgment. But David was a king, and it behoved a king to be wisely cautious. Experience might have taught him that the heart of man is subtle, greedy after its own aggrandisement, envious, and ready to

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accuse: he might have learned also, that there are few things the heart is so ready to believe as accusation: and that "if a ruler hearken unto lies, all his servants will be wicked." Mephibosheth had given David no reason to suspect his fidelity. Why then should Ziba be so easily believed? Why should Mephibosheth be condemned — undefended, and unheard?

David however, was ensnared. Kindness overcame him. The rash sentence passed his lips. "Thine," said he to Ziba, "be all that pertaineth unto Mephibosheth." Mephibosheth was thus suddenly stripped of all that he had — his servant exalted — himself beggared. And yet what had Mephibosheth done? He had earnestly desired not only to acknowledge David, but to *follow* him. He had wished to be the companion of his dangers, and the associate of his dishonour, but Ziba had deceived and hindered him. When David at last returned triumphant, Mephibosheth met him. And David said, "Wherefore wentest thou not with me, Mephibosheth? and he answered, My lord, O king, my servant deceived me; for thy servant said, I will saddle me an ass, that I may ride thereon, and go to the king; because thy servant is lame. And he hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king." Thus Mephibosheth had desired to do what Ziba had *not* done; for Ziba, though he had met David with a present (a present indeed drawn from the stores of another) had nevertheless not *followed* David. Anxious apparently lest he should suffer if

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Absalom were to succeed, he seems to have retired to Shimei and the Benjamites, to secure his interests with them; for he was found, when the King returned, in the train of Shimei—that same Shimei who had cursed David. If Absalom had prospered, Ziba no doubt would have pleaded that he had not been one of the followers of David; nay more, that he had prevented Mephibosheth from following him; and as for the gifts, he could easily have accounted for *them* by an alleged necessity of yielding to his master's will, or by some similar fiction—for plausibility is always at the command of an unscrupulous tongue. But whilst Ziba was thus found with the enemies of David when David returned, what during this time had been the condition of Mephibosheth? He had mourned after David: "he had neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace:" and when David, shrinking apparently from the frank confession of his error, reversed half only of his unrighteous sentence, and hastily said, as if vexed and angered, "Why speakest thou any more of thy matters?" I have said, "Thou and Ziba divide the land:" Mephibosheth meekly answered, "Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house." What words ever entered the ear of David more expressive of value for his person, and for his office than these—words worthy of the son of him who loved David as his own soul? Yet David made no reply—no

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confession. Mephibosheth—the faithful, affectionate, devoted Mephibosheth—the son of Jonathan, David's friend, retired dishonoured from the presence of the King. Thus Satan's end was answered; a dark blot was made to rest upon that which would otherwise have been one of the brightest and fairest pages in the history of David. The King had failed in judgment.

It was the remembrance, we may believe, of failures such as these, that caused David to say, in his dying hour, that it was needful that Another should come to be that which he had not been—One more righteous than himself to rule perfectly in the fear of God—One more mighty than himself to subject thoroughly the proud power of evil. "The God of Israel hath said, The Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God: and he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow. But the sons of Belial shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands: but the man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron, and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place."

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Such were the last words of the Psalmist of Israel—words of deep confession, but yet of confidence and hope; for they were *prophetic* words. Although in respect of the past, he had to speak of himself, and to speak mournfully; yet in respect of the future, he could prophesy of Another, and *there* all was triumph. Indeed, all his Psalms were Songs, because they all referred, more or less, to things yet to come. Hope is the sun-beam that gives to the songs of the sweet Psalmist of Israel their brightness, and hope has respect to the future. Though it was peculiarly his to triumph out of affliction, and to see God's people triumph with him, and though such triumphs were in themselves precious, yet their chief preciousness consisted in this, that they were types of things yet to come. Types indeed, in one sense are but shadows, and shadows pass away; yet as shadows appointed of God, they are the pledge of realities to come, and form the ground of faith's substantial joy.

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VII.

SOLOMON.

Israel, under David reached, and under Solomon passed, the culminating point of their typical greatness. Notwithstanding all their transgressions, God would not permit the long-merited chastisement of subjection to the Gentiles to fall nationally upon them, until their history had first supplied the types of those blessings, which it is His final purpose to bestow. Moses as their deliverer from Egypt, and their legislator—Aaron as their priest—Joshua as introducing them into the land of their inheritance—David as establishing them in the citadel of strength on Zion—all severally foreshadowed Him who is destined to bear all these offices, without the weakness, and without the failure of those who typically held them. The types however of Israel's glory were not complete until Solomon came. It was his to act in that place of established peace and supremacy which the conflicts of David had attained. The sword was the emblem of the one; the sceptre of peace, of the other. It was the King of peace, not the conqueror, that was to build the Temple of the Lord, and to make Israel know the difference between action and rest; between blessings struggled

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for, and blessings reached and developed in their results.

We have already seen that, from the earliest period of Israel's history, the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord had been among them in all their wanderings, and throughout all their conflicts—the token of God's presence amongst His people, as their leader and their guide. The right order of Israel's instruction and Israel's worship depended on the Ark being duly sought unto in the appointed manner, in its own proper dwelling-place: and that dwelling-place was a Tabernacle or Tent—the token of unfixedness of habitation, the evidence that the place of established rest was not yet attained. And even when the energy of David had recovered the Ark from the place of its virtual banishment, and placed it in the citadel of Zion—a place of strength, the like to which it had never occupied before, yet still it left not its curtain dwelling-place. It might sojourn but it would not abidingly dwell in a place which was a citadel of warlike strength, won and still maintained by the sword of conflict. The sword must be laid aside—all enemies must be thoroughly subdued—the hand of Israel and of Israel's King must be washed from the stain of blood, before a place could be prepared in which the Ark of the Lord should be able to dwell for ever. Conflict is not peace; destruction is not heavenly blessing. Present experience daily teaches us that the assailment or resistance of error is not the same thing as edification in truth. Indeed, it is very

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possible that progress in the truth may cease whilst the energies are being occupied in opposing error; and of this the recent history of Protestantism affords many a sad example.

Accordingly, it was reserved for Solomon, the Prince of Peace, to build the Temple of the Lord. Then the Ark entered into its abiding rest. The staves by which it had been borne so long, the tokens therefore of its pilgrim condition, were now drawn out, so as no longer to be seen. Nothing remained in the Ark itself, except the Tables of the Covenant. The golden pot of hidden manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, had been in it during its wilderness condition, as types of mercies in reserve—mercies hidden with God. But when the time of establishment has come, the mercies at present hidden are to be manifested, and not any longer to be held in reserve. Christ, now typified by the *hidden* rod of power and by the manna *hidden*, will then be manifested as effecting all that mighty power can effect, in aiding by his might, and feeding by His grace His ransomed people. Nothing therefore remained in the Ark except the Law, that witness of the unchanged holiness of God, and the Ark was covered by the mercy-seat—a mercy-seat that had been sprinkled with blood: and over the mercy-seat were the cherubim of glory. The types of holiness, of redemption, and of glory were thus combined. "Mercy and truth had met together, righteousness and peace had kissed each other:" and yet more, on the ground of their having thus

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met, God was now entering into a new relation to His people, even one of fixedness and established rest for ever. Nothing that is transitory can perfectly satisfy the heart. Indeed, there is a sting that none but God can remedy in all blessings that pass away: but when the power of perfect blessing is present, never more to be removed, what is wanting to the completeness of the joy? Typically, it was so then. As soon as the Priests had borne the Ark into its resting place, and quitted the sanctuary as those who had finished their work, nothing was heard save the sound of thanksgiving and praise, nothing was seen in the sanctuary save glory filling the house. "And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place; * * * also the Levites, which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals, and psalteries, and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets; it came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of

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God." It was meet that ministration *towards* God should be suspended; for it was an hour characterised, not by ministration *toward* God, but by ministration *from* Him, out of the riches of His own grace and glorious power. The peculiar feature of the hour was that God was about to *give*—Israel and the earth about to *receive*, blessing. It was the manifestation of Melchisedek, who came to bless rather than to receive.

Yet all that marvellous and glorious scene was but a type. It stood in the same relation to the yet future hour of Israel's blessing under the true Solomon, as did the first man, who was earthy, to the second man "the Lord from Heaven:" or as did the hour when Aaron in garments of glory and beauty stood by the side of Moses and blessed the people, to that coming hour when the eternal Priest and King shall return in glory, "without sin, unto salvation." Yet although that scene is a shadow, not substance, yet as given of God, it stands as a memorial and pledge of things soon to be fulfilled, for which we wait. The glory and the joy of the great coming day will be as much greater than the glory and joy and thanksgiving of that typical day, as heaven is greater than earth—as Christ is greater than Solomon. The holy places made with hands which Solomon builded, will then have as their manifested antitypes, Heaven itself, and the Heavenly city—the new Jerusalem. They will be seen as "the heavenly places not made with hands;" whilst Jerusalem on earth, the converted, sanctified

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Jerusalem, will become the earthly court of the Temple of the great King. The blessings prepared shall not fail for want of an administrative hand of adequate wisdom, and holiness, and power; for Christ Himself shall reign in righteousness, and "minister judgment to the peoples in uprightness." "The government shall be upon His shoulder * * * Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this." (Isaiah ix. 6, 7.) When David had prayed for these things, it is said, his prayers ended. "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended." (Psalm lxxii.) When his eyes shall at last behold these things, his prayers shall be answered—his desires fulfilled.

The presence of the glory of God, therefore, was not the only blessing of that typical day. There was provided in Solomon, one who should instrumentally control the distribution of the blessings given, that they might be diffused aright, and applied according to the design of Him who gave them. Endowed with understanding from God (see 1 Kings iv. 30)—wise in judgment—instructed even in the secrets of nature—able to speak of trees from the cedar that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall—admired and consulted by Kings and nations—reigning from the Euphrates to the river of Egypt, Solomon stood as

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a type, imperfect indeed, but yet a type of Him in whom essential wisdom dwells; and who will by and by apply that wisdom to the regulation of human life throughout all nations—able not merely to control men externally (which was all that Solomon could do), but able also to reign in the heart—competent not only to use aright that which is present, but having also almighty creative power to supply that which is lacking—ruling not merely from the river to Egypt, but from the river unto the ends of the earth; for "all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him"—reigning not merely in Jerusalem, but "setting His glory *above the Heavens;*" (Ps. viii.) when He will reign, having all things put in subjection under Him. "His name shall endure for ever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed." (Psalm lxxii.)

The day of Solomon ended in darkness. God ceased — men ceased — to call him blessed. The earthen vessel was broken, and all that would now remain for us would be, to mourn hopelessly over its ruin, if we did not know it as a type of another that shall remain in excellency and beauty for ever. After Solomon, darkness began steadily to settle in. Israel and Jerusalem were swept away. Christianity succeeded. *That* has similarly failed; and now the black night of antichristian apostasy is drawing nigh.

It is in the midst of this dark scene that the true

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Head of Israel, He of whom David was but the type, has found the sphere for His sufferings, and for His conflicts—conflicts which, though indeed prolonged, shall end at last in triumph and in victory, such as David never knew. Christ's conflict with the power of evil was not terminated when His own personal sorrows in the flesh ended. Though personally absent, He is still by His Spirit present, and suffers in the sufferings and conflicts of His servants. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou ME." His Spirit still struggles against the corruptions *amongst* His people, as well as against the power of the enemy without. The principles of Saul, of Doeg, of Shimei, and of Absalom, are still seen on every side; and they prosper. Nor will it be otherwise yet. Evil will continue to flourish for a season; and they who have the Spirit of Christ must be content to mourn, and to say, "Lord, how long?

It is true indeed, that the personal exaltation of Christ and His return unto His own proper glory, does enable the Church already to anticipate by faith many of those blessings, which in their manifested and full results, belong only to the great coming day of triumph and peace. We can already say, "*seated,*" (and that is a word of establishment and rest) "seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." We already receive from God a strength which is "according to the working of that mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right

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hand:" nor will the future establishment of God's truth and glory in the earth, be any thing more than a bringing things below into correspondency with the present condition of Him, who as the Lord of all things, and as the Prince of the Kings of the earth, is (though His title is at present not enforced) already established in the heavens. It is thus that the Church is at the same time cognisant of things as opposed one to the other as heaven is contrasted with earth, or Christ with Satan. Whilst, because one with its glorified Head, it knows above, heights of glory unspeakable, and a fulness of love passing knowledge; in the earth, it practically realises the augmented and still unceasing sorrows of that "evil day" in which the ruler of the darkness of this age, yet unsubjected, is marshalling his powers for his last great struggle. Thus there is at once the knowledge of joy, and of sorrow—of light, and of darkness, of good, and of evil: yet we are able to add, through God's abounding mercy, that the knowledge of the evil is temporal, but the knowledge of the good is eternal. Happy are they who walk in the comfort of the light—unterrified by the present depth of darkness, unattracted by the false lights which Satan kindles in its midst.

It is this connection of the Church with rest and peace and glory above, whilst at the same time it remains in conflict with all fulness of evil beneath, that enables it to use the *whole* of Scripture, as in some way or other, applicable to its own condition.

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The being able to say, "old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (words not true of our present *personal* condition on the earth, but true of us as viewed in Christ, our risen Head), our title to say this, opens to our use the principles and the joys of the new creation: whilst the being obliged to add, that the age of evil shall not pass away until all its predicted course of wickedness has been fully run, makes us equally cognisant, practically, of every form of iniquity that Scripture has recorded, from the destruction of Abel to the revelation of Antichrist. Therefore, whilst the history of David and his conflicts supplies many a lesson suited to our present position here, we have also access, by faith, to a rest already secured for us above the heavens, and we are able to speak in a manner that David could not, of being "established" in Him, who has not only died, but who has also risen for us. (2 Cor. v. 15.) The time is drawing nigh when the David-season of conflict shall for ever cease; when the true David shall finally say of His enemies, "then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind; I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets." The 18th Psalm, from which these words are taken, is the last celebration of triumph over the might of opposing adversaries; and when that shall be fulfilled, the day of peace will have come: David will give place to Solomon, and the true Prince of peace shall reign for ever.

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VIII.

JONATHAN—JOAB.

If the Scripture had been made the record of perfectness only, it must have been restricted to the history of One alone, even of Him who never swerved in outward deed or in inward feeling from the strict rule of holiness and truth, "who loved righteousness, and hated iniquity" and who shall therefore be manifested as the One only perfect, whom God "hath anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows." But the Scripture is not the record of good only. It teaches us respecting evil also, not merely as seen in its pure unmitigated forms, but in its more insidious working among God's own saints, where it ever seeks (and oft-times successfully) to hinder their grace, and to mar their service in result.

The servants of God cannot too carefully remember, even when their desires are right towards God, yet that those desires may be frustrated in result, by some relation that may subsist between themselves and others. Entanglement with others may hold us back from good, or even connect us with activity of evil. We may become partakers of other men's

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sins. If the faith and energies of David had been submitted to Saul, and made the servant of his will, what would David's history have become? He might have perished with his master on the mountains of Gilboa, but he never would have known either the wilderness or the throne.

The history of Jonathan, the friend of David, lovely, and, in many respects, excellent as it is, is chiefly important as teaching us the sad results that flow from subserviency to others who are acting in contrariety to God. The energy of Jonathan was not inferior to that of David, or of any other who had before appeared in Israel. The first movement of faith recorded under the reign of Saul, originated exclusively in Jonathan. The Philistines were strong—Israel peculiarly weak; and Saul so far from taking the place of an assailant, sent Israel away, "every one to his tent." Three thousand only were retained, of whom one thousand were assigned to Jonathan as a kind of guard of honour in his native city. But inactivity ill suited Jonathan: his soul longed for service against the enemies of Israel and Israel's God. Accordingly, he arose and smote a neighbouring garrison of the Philistines. Saul, proud, impetuous, and easily elated, exulted in the triumph, proclaimed it, and blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear." He spoke to *Israel*, but he called them *Hebrews*. Israel, a title given of God to the people whom He had chosen, sounded in the ear of faith very differently from "Hebrews," which was their

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mere natural name: yet "Hebrews" was the name that Saul preferred. It would seem as if his soul had never appreciated the difference between being the head of a nation that was like unto other nations, and being the head of the chosen separated people of God.

Israel heard the proclamation. They heard that Saul (for Jonathan was not mentioned) had smitten the Philistines, and no doubt they rejoiced with him. But their joy was very brief. What can be more disastrous than being led by others into circumstances which we have no grace to appreciate; no faith to act in aright? Neither Saul nor Israel had risen against the Philistines; the attack and the triumph were Jonathan's, not theirs. And now, when the consequences of that act began to be felt, when it was found that the boastful notes of Saul's trumpets had reached the Philistines also, and that their vexed and angry hosts were assembling for vengeance, all trembled. Never scarcely, was there a scene of greater dismay in Israel. "The people hid themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits;" and some even fled over Jordan, not satisfied until they had placed its waters between themselves and their irritated foes. The few that did remain with Saul, "followed him trembling."

Yet the resources of Israel, which were not natural merely, had not really failed; and it was open to Saul to avail himself of them if he would only wait on God and obey Him. One of the chief

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mercies that had been granted to Israel, was the gift of Samuel, the Prophet of God. Saul had often proved the value of Samuel, and he did not forget him now. He sent for Samuel; but Samuel delayed to come. Faith would have waited; but Saul was not of faith. Nature ruled in him; and nature will not wait. Accordingly, when Samuel came not, Saul determined to act without him, and to sacrifice, even though he well knew that God had forbidden *him* to sacrifice. He sacrificed however: the deed of disobedience was committed, and then Samuel came. But he came only to upbraid. He denounced the deed that Saul had committed, and departed, leaving Israel and Saul in worse exigency than before.

But when the *official* resources with which God may have supplied his people fail—utterly fail, He has other resources, secret, and *unofficial*, which by His own power He can develop, and so work salvation. Saul had effected nothing. He had made one effort: but he had made it so as to turn blessing into curse. There was no hope for Israel in its *official* head; yet apparently they thought of no other. Jonathan was in the midst of Israel, but we find not even the mention of his name. Saul was prominent in every thing, and Jonathan forgotten. Nevertheless, *his* faith had not failed; it remained firm and vigorous as when he first smote the garrison of Philistia. Unterrified by the panic of Israel—undismayed even by the failure of Israel's king, he remembered that Israel were still God's

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people, and that the Philistines were still God's enemies. Alone therefore, (save that his armour-bearer followed him,) he left the camp of Israel, and approached the strong-hold of the Philistines. Yet he advanced not rashly. Faith is not rash towards God. He advanced considerately, waiting for a sign. The sign was given; he confronted the foe, and triumphed. The Philistines said when they first discerned him, "Behold, the *Hebrews* come forth out of the holes," but Jonathan said, "The Lord hath delivered them into the hand of *Israel*." He did not say, The Lord hath delivered them into *my* hand, nor into the hands of the *Hebrews*, but he said, "The Lord hath delivered them into the hand of *Israel*"—for Israel he knew was a name of blessing pertaining to that people whom God had made His people, and that fact constituted the ground of Jonathan's hope. Nor was his faith in vain. There was never perhaps a time, when Israel triumphed more signally than then.

It was a day of grace — unmerited grace — a day that received its distinctive characteristic from the spontaneous goodness of God in sending strength, and working deliverance. It was therefore in harmony with the character of such a day, that Jonathan, faint at last and weary from the long-continued struggle, should find provision made to refresh his weariness, and revive his failing strength. Still following the flying foe, he entered a wood, and found honey dropping around him from the trees. He thought not of resting; he wished

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for no repose: his heart was set on following out the purposes of God against God's and Israel's enemies. Any thing that could aid him in this he welcomed. The honey, therefore, came to him as a gift from God. Hastily dipping into it his rod (for he would not tarry) he tasted. His strength revived, and he went on to further conflict. The honey therefore was no snare, no hindrance to *him*. On the contrary, it was God's method for supplying his need; nor do the natural gifts of God's goodness ever hinder those who use them merely as helps in fighting the fight of faith. Israel would have been blessed with double victory, and preserved too from dire transgression, if they also had eaten of the honey on that day.

That day would indeed have been one of unmixed joy to Israel, if the faith of Jonathan who had ushered in its blessing, had been allowed to give to it its character throughout. But Saul too acted. Helpless and motionless until Jonathan had virtually conquered, Saul followed in his wake, and commenced his connexion with this day of blessing and of grace, by uttering words of curse. "Cursed," said he, "be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on MINE enemies." His words were either intended as a vow whereby he wished to propitiate heaven and purchase the favour which God in grace was giving; or else they were the expression of his own lordly will, reckless of the sufferings of his servants, and careless of their needs, if so be only his own selfish interest

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were secured. But whatever his motive, woe followed in result. The enemy were not destroyed; Israel were driven into sin (for they satiated in their own way the hunger which God had not been allowed to satisfy in His) and afterward, *in intention*, Saul became the destroyer of his own son. Such were the black lines of evil drawn by the hand of Saul across the brightness of that day of grace and blessing. Had Saul forgotten Jephthah? Jephthah vowed in a day of grace; he introduced the thought of human agency into a day marked as one devoted to the agency of God, and wished to purchase, where God was giving; and Jephthah closed his day of triumph in agony and in woe.

And see the inconsistency of evil. Known and solemn commandments of God, Saul hesitated not to break. God had forbidden *him* to sacrifice; yet he would sacrifice; God had commanded Amalek to be destroyed, but Saul would *not* destroy them. In these cases he found no difficulty in violating the commandments of God. But his own commandment — a commandment he had invented for himself, must not be broken, no, not even if its observance involved the necessity of shedding the blood of Jonathan himself. Such is the hypocrisy of self-willed pride. At one moment it daringly tramples down the principles of truth and holiness, and spurns the barriers which God's own hand has raised: at another, it vaunts its subjection to the claims of duty, and proclaims the painfulness of the submission which it ostentatiously renders to

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the requirements of God—pretended or self-imposed requirements. Would that we could say that such inconsistencies were no longer seen; but they still abound. They are ever marked by loud professions of subjection to God and to His Spirit; and these professions terrify the simple. But let the proud claim be tested: selfishness and pride will soon be seen to be the spring of every thought, the guide of every action. The meekness is false — the devotedness is fictitious. Let this be discerned, and the spell is broken.

Jonathan therefore, dwelling in the midst of circumstances such as these, must have been trained in a school of peculiar sorrow. He could not but be sensible of the entire unfitness of Saul for the place that he was holding in Israel. Every day added fresh evidence of his father's incompetency, and his heart must continually have felt what his lips sometimes were constrained to express, that his father was he who troubled Israel. He saw around him perpetual proofs of God's blessing being steadily withdrawn; and he must often have remembered the words of Samuel, when he said unto Saul, "Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, which He commanded thee: for now would the Lord have established thy kingdom upon Israel for ever. But now thy kingdom shall not continue; for the Lord hath sought Him a man after His own heart, and the Lord hath commanded him to be captain over His people." Bitter words for Jonathan, when we re-

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member how thoroughly he had the heart of a king —how well he had proved his qualifications to lead Israel to victory, and to honour. Nevertheless, though he must have felt the rejection to be bitter, there was perhaps never a heart among any of the mere human servants of God, that learned to bow with more entire submission to His will, and to rejoice in another's prosperity as if it had been his own. When his rival at length appeared,— he who was to wear, in place of himself, the crown of Israel, —instead of hating him because he was his rival, he discerned his excellency, acknowledged his qualifications, and loved him. The songs of the women of Israel, as they celebrated David, aroused in Jonathan no jealousy. In vain his father upbraided, saying that he had chosen the son of Jesse to his own confusion; his heart was still faithful in its love, still true to its apprehension of David's excellency. "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David; and Jonathan loved him as his own soul."

It can hardly be questioned that there was much of natural affection in the attachment of Jonathan to David, and this perhaps may account for his not being found with David in the wilderness, and in the cave of Adullam. In reviewing the relation of Jonathan to David, fair and lovely as it is, we can easily trace in it elements of feeling, very different from those which marked the words of Elisha, when he said unto Elijah, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." Jonathan

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wept over David bitterly, yet Jonathan left David. The affection of friendship whenever it forms a too prevailing element in the attachment we bear towards the servants of the Lord, is like clay mingled with iron, or like silken threads woven into the contexture of the cable's strength. Weakness is insinuated into the whole: it will not bear the stress of circumstances: it cannot be trusted in the day of storm and tempest. Natural feelings, various, and often conflicting in their character, may easily be brought into competition one with the other, but where Truth really forms the bond, the principles of Truth jar not with each other: they know of no competition among themselves. He who beholds his friend in the light in which strong natural affection presents him, is little likely to estimate fully his friend's position as a servant of God. Whilst Jonathan was considering how dear David was to himself, he was less likely to remember the excellency of David's relation to Israel and to God. The love that he bore to Saul his father and to his father's house, might well come into competition with the love that he bore to David as his friend: but if he had been able to divest himself of these personal feelings, and to contemplate David only as the servant of God — if he had only seen in him the appointed centre around which the interests of truth and of Israel were to revolve, and had looked upon David in the cave of Adullam, in the light in which Ruth beheld Naomi, or Elisha contemplated Elijah, could he have left him then? Would not

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the same faith that brought him up against the strong-hold of the Philistines have turned him towards the wilderness in which David dwelt? To see God in the servants of God, is a different thing from seeing simply *them*. Ruth spake not the words of mere natural affection when she said to Naomi, "Whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people and thy God my God; where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part me and thee."

The more sensitive the conscience—the more it appreciates its responsibilities, and keeps itself open to the claims of duty, the more sure it is to mistrust any path towards which mere natural affection strongly tends: and in such a case, affection if it has leaned towards Truth, may prove a hindrance to Truth being followed. The soul will probably dread lest it should be pleasing itself under the pretence of pleasing God, and if friendship or affection have been allowed unduly to preponderate in the view that we have taken of the truth and its servants, the decision (when decision must be made) is very likely to be contrary both to it and them. Even then if Jonathan had loved his parent less than he did, (he appears to have loved him fervently, they were not divided in life, nor in death,) yet probably his sensitive soul would still have dreaded (and justly so) to put the claim of mere affection towards David in competition with that of *duty* towards his parent. He seemed not sufficiently to remember

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that a duty more imperative than any that could be due to the claim of natural relation, might and did bind him to David. If he had loved David as a friend less exclusively—if he had thought of him as a servant of the Lord more constantly, he would not have dreaded, as he probably did, the wrong power of affection. Affection and duty *may* possibly unite around the same object. Mary the mother of the Lord, loved Him as her Son, her first-born. But was that the link that bound her to Him and to His sorrows, or did she recognise in Him the Saviour of Israel—God her Redeemer?

But whatever the reasons, the fact cannot be disputed, that when Scripture records in honourable series, the names of the mighty of Israel who were with David in the hold, the name of Jonathan is not there. None of them indeed could rival Jonathan in beauty of character, or surpass the past triumphs of his faith. There were few, if any, among them, in whom David's soul delighted. Nevertheless, in consequence of being linked to him by whom God was working His work of blessing, they were drawn together with him within the circle of honour. *There* was found the strength of Israel — *there* was the sphere of Israel's true prowess and renown—*there* were they whom God was using for His own purposes of blessing towards His people. *They* were being used, whilst Jonathan, as one forgotten or unknown, pined in the courts of Saul, like another Samson shorn of his strength and made the servant of another's will. From the moment when David

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quitted the house of Saul, and the strength of Israel travelled with him into the wilderness, no deed of faith is recorded of Jonathan. Neutralised and inactive, he seems to have become as nothing; for he trod not the path that Israel's strength was treading. Better indeed to be nothing, than to put forth power for the support of that which is striving against God: better that energy should be extinguished, rather than be cast as a weight into the scale of evil. The link that bound Jonathan to Saul was never broken here. It fettered him to the last, until he fell dishonoured on the mountains of Gilboa —a solemn memorial to all who think that personal grace can atone for wrongness of position. Personal grace cannot sanctify evil, nor force it into channels of good. The brightest lamp cannot penetrate impenetrable blackness. Many a light is borne into the deep caverns of the earth, there to glimmer and expire, quenched by the foul breath of subterranean darkness.

Yet whilst we thus see in Jonathan the sorrowful effect of wrong position on personal grace of highest character, we must nevertheless remember, that the want of such grace cannot be compensated for by rightness of position. Indeed, the deficiency is likely to become more marked, and the results more disastrous, by means of the very opportunities for increased activity, which rightness of position affords. What can be more disastrous than energy unsubjected to God? It is disastrous in any sphere; but most of all, when acting within the narrowed

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precincts of those who are sharing the sufferings or conflicts of the Truth.

Among the followers and closest adherents of David, Joab was one. He was early found with David in the cave. Whilst Jonathan tarried in the courts of Saul, Joab was sharing the hardships and the dangers of David in the wilderness. Throughout all his subsequent dangers, he stood like a lion at his side, and if extent of outward service were regarded, David perhaps had no such servant as he. Yet in order to serve David aright, it was necessary to have respect not to his office merely, but also to appreciate the character of him who bore that office; to love him for his own as well as for his office sake, and above all, to remember that no real service could be rendered to David, except God were reverently regarded, and reverently obeyed. We may serve, because of the dignity of his office, one whose excellency as an individual we care not for. In such a case, our service, however energetic, will probably originate in self-interest, and its course will be marked by self-will and pride. Joab seldom failed to think of the interests of David's crown. He believed that it was best that the crown should be on David's brow; and in sustaining the interests of that crown he knew that he was sustaining his own interests too. But however anxiously or even plaintively David might make known his desires—however decidedly he might express his judgment, or declare his resolutions, Joab never hesitated, whenever he had the opportunity to out-

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rage the feelings of David, or to disobey his will, if he could thereby gratify his own desires, without at the same time compromising the stability of David's throne. In such a case, he regarded neither David nor God.

If Joab had loved David, if he had regarded him as a friend, would he have so recklessly despised the anguish of David's heart, and made him say, "Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" When David had pledged his royal word to Abner and Amasa for their preservation, would Joab, if he had feared God, or respected the desires of David, or regarded his honour as king, have twice incurred the guilt of treacherous murder? Many a time had David to say, "Though an anointed king, I am weak, because of you, ye sons of Zeruiah,"—he said "sons of Zeruiah," for Joab's brothers were like himself. Proud of his own sacrifices on behalf of David; able to recount, and to recount with truth, conflicts and perils unnumbered, Joab seemed to act as if none had a title to dispute his lordly will—as if no judgment were so sure as his, no arm so prompt, no execution so efficient. If David had been Solomon—if the typical day of established righteousness and peace had come, we should doubtless have seen Joab smitten or restrained. But a time of conflict—a time while the enemies are yet lifting up the head, is not a time for final rectification. Joab therefore continued: his evil ripened: and David was obliged to bear it. Nor is it otherwise now. Many a Joab-like spirit

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yet puts forth its energies amongst the professing, and not unfrequently among the real people of Christ, whose course probably will never be stopped, until "God ariseth to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth."

During Absalom's rebellion, Joab, as might have been expected, was most true to David; for he had no desire to see David destroyed, or to see his government supplanted, and another order substituted instead. Joab well knew that all this was in the heart of Absalom, and therefore he was ready to resist him unto death. He had no desire to see the order of David's government changed. On the contrary, he wished that it should be continued; and continued in David's person, so long as circumstances seemed to permit. He therefore fought against Absalom: but as years rolled on, and when David, through excess of age, had virtually become as dead, and no provision had been made for supplying a successor to the throne, it was only in keeping with the character of Joab that he should devise what seemed to him most expedient for the future interests of David's house and for his own interest in connection therewith. Accordingly, without any view apparently of dethroning David, and merely having for his object the establishment of his kingdom in a successor, he united with Adonijah. But in doing this, he thwarted the determinate resolve, not of David merely, but of God; and placed himself in a position where the sword of Solomon (to whom it belonged to accom-

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plish the necessary inflictions of righteousness, in order that no fostered evil might disturb the perfectness of peace) necessarily fell on him as a transgressor. His hoar head, according to the commandment of David, was brought down to the grave with blood. The fall of Jonathan on the mountains of Gilboa, was not so terrible as this: the lesson taught thereby was not so solemn.

Few will doubt that Jonathan was a saint of God: but he was living under a dispensation of Law. *Dispensationally* he was under law, not under grace; and therefore his history was probably intended to evidence that even the amiabilities of nature, if indulged, can, when dealt with in law, be neither remedied nor pardoned. The Law can detect—expose—condemn, but it neither remedies nor pardons. Even Moses, whilst dealt with under Law, was not permitted to enter the land of Canaan, but died in the wilderness, because of having spoken unadvisedly with his lips. Nevertheless, the same Moses, under grace, stood on the Mount of Transfiguration, glorified with his Lord. The Corinthians in the days of the Apostle Paul, exhibited not weakness merely, but rebellious evil; yet the Corinthians (for they were ostensibly, as well as actually, under grace and not under Law) were recovered and blessed even here. The Apostle met their evil firmly, but patiently, in the long-suffering wisdom of grace — admonishing where he might have upbraided—beseeching where he might have smitten: and the result was godly sorrow, repentance and restoration.

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It is true, indeed, that our frowardness and self-will may resist even the gentleness of grace. If it be so, God is not destitute of means to vindicate His own holiness, and to teach us that He is God, He can teach us either by the bitterness of present chastisement; or by the abundance of the "wood, hay, and stubble" found in that final day, when, though every one whose feet are on the Rock shall be saved, many will nevertheless apprehend the difference between receiving a reward, and suffering loss by seeing the results of self-willed and disobedient energy committed like stubble to the flames.

In the present hour of the Church's weakness, when the energy which it once had whilst standing as "the pillar and ground of the truth" has departed; and when many are tempted to devise some plan whereby the imperilled interests of Truth may be preserved, it is likely that many a self-devised scheme should be adopted, very contrary to the thoughts of Christ, and of God. The suspension of the energies of Truth may make it seem as if its throne were virtually vacated. We may therefore think ourselves at liberty to take expediency for our guide, and to select our own means for filling that Throne and maintaining its supremacy. Joab did not, like Absalom, desire to subvert the Throne of David: he wished rather to preserve it; and it was for this he selected Adonijah. But Adonijah was not Solomon. Adonijah was not he with whom the covenant blessing of the God of Israel was. Thus

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there may be many at the present hour, who, undeceived by the smooth words of Sadducean liberalism, and detecting in them deadly hostility to Christ and to His Truth, escape the toils of Absalom; and yet, whilst seeking to uphold in their own way and perhaps for their own purposes, the interests of Truth, they may devise means and adopt principles as foreign to the intentions of God, as Joab's self-willed exaltation of Adonijah.

There are no principles which God recognises as His, save those which will characterize the true Solomon when manifested in His glory. Allegiance to any other principles is rebellion and sin: and yet what principles are less recognised in the Church of God? Scorned by the world, neglected by the Church, they languish in obscurity: but suddenly, at an hour men think not, God will own them, and establish them according to their own intrinsic excellency, and give them supremacy for evermore.

It belongs not to us to resuscitate departed energies, or to restore Truth to the dominion which it once held in the Church of God. But we may refuse to desert it: we may cleave to it, and serve it in the days of its widowhood and sorrow. Some exulting in its fall would bury it like a putrifying corpse, and substitute in its stead something else, fair and attractive to the human eye. Others pretend to consult and provide for its interests by means unsanctioned and unappointed of God. In either case we have to beware. The period when the season of the Truth's conflicts is about to ter-

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imnate in glory, is likely to be one of weakness, and of trial. Even the faithful servants of David, in their typical day, found it so. But they waited, and they waited not in vain. At last the day of the glory of Solomon came, and did it repent them then that they had waited for it?

It is true indeed, that David even in his weakness was still David; whereas now, where is a David or even a Jonathan found throughout all the Church of God? Our energies, even when not mis-directed, seem fallen to the lowest ebb. Nevertheless Christ remaineth, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He is able, however great the weakness, to give "grace unto the humble." The Church cannot lose its *kingly* calling — it has not ceased to be a *royal* Priesthood unto God; and they who wait on His grace may yet find some paths open to their feet, in following which, they may find *encouragement*, as well as instructions in the sufferings, and restorations, and triumphs of DAVID THE KING. "Blessed are they that sow beside all waters." "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

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DAVID AND THE THRESHING-FLOOR OF ARAUNAH THE JEBUSITE.

It was a great honour to the "holy men of God" who were of old, to be used by the Holy Ghost as His instruments in unveiling the future, and declaring the purposes of God. But it was an added honour when by their deeds of faith, or by their endurance, they were caused practically to foreshadow the path of the coming Head and Ruler of Israel, whose sufferings and whose glories it was the chief object of their prophecies to unfold.

Among the Prophets no one so fully as David delineated the bitterness of the sufferings of the Messiah of Israel. Isaiah more clearly declared the *reason* of Christ's sufferings, and revealed *why* "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter;" but no one so fully as David describes the character and intensity of His agony. See for example the twenty-second Psalm—the Psalm of the Cross. "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death." No where in the Old Testament do we find descriptions of Christ's personal anguish so minute and so vivid

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as in the twenty-second and like Psalms. On the other hand, where do we find more clear and amplified descriptions of His coming reign in glory? Take Psalms viii., xviii., lxxii., xcvii., cx., as examples. "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad: let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth." Ps. xcvi.

"God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding. God reigneth over the Gentiles [עַל־גּוֹיִם]. God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. The princes of the peoples [עַמֵּי] are gathered together [as] the people [עַם] of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: he is greatly exalted." Ps. xlvii. 5—9.

But whilst David was thus honoured in being empowered to pourtray so vividly the personal suffering and the personal glory of the great Head of Israel, he was also privileged more than any other among the Old Testament Prophets, in being caused to foreshadow (imperfectly indeed and partially), yet still to foreshadow in his own personal history the path of rejection and reproach, in which the King and the Redeemer of Israel was to walk, during the

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days of His humiliation. On the other hand, there were also occasions (and they not few) when David was appointed to foreshadow the triumphs of the coming "King of nations," when Moab, and Edom, and Amalek, and all the rebellious strength of man, shall fall before Him, and "the earth tremble and be still." Many of David's triumphs were intended as types and earnests of that coming hour, and are so referred to in the Psalms.

But the favour with which God regarded David, and the honour which He placed upon him, was not displayed so much in the seasons of his triumphs as in the periods when for God's sake, hated alike by the Philistines and by the House of Israel under Saul, he became a fugitive in the land of God's people, and wandered up and down in the wilderness, finding even there no place of rest, no, not even in the despised cave of Adullam. When Moses, rejected by Israel and hated by the Egyptians, sought for refuge in the wilderness, he was allowed there to repose. The sword of the enemy followed him not. A hedge of defence was drawn around him and he rested peacefully. But it was otherwise with David. Though dwelling far away from the courts of Saul, and from the cities of Israel, and hiding himself in dens and caves of the earth, he was still "hunted like a partridge on the mountains," and had, again and again, to say, "They be many that fight against me, O thou Most High."

Great therefore, and peculiar was the honour

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vouchsafed to David. Great grace was granted to him. Whilst walking in the power of this grace, and therefore elevated above the level of his natural condition, he was prospered. God worked in him: God sustained and guided him. But David was still a man—a poor, weak, sinful man. Through grace he could, and he did obey: but apart from grace, his tendencies were as the tendencies of other men: and he who was "the anointed of the God of Jacob," and "the sweet Psalmist of Israel" —"the man after God's own heart," could, even as others, disobey. By obedience he could guide (and often he *did* guide) Israel onward in paths of honour and blessing: by disobedience he could betray them into paths of disaster and ruin, and become to them a curse—not a blessing. Thus, he whose leadership at one moment foreshadowed the blessedness of that hour when the great Shepherd of Israel shall feed them "according to the integrity of his heart, and guide them by the skilfulness of his hand," may, the next moment, foreshadow the misery and woe of other periods, when Israel and the nations, led and ruled by lawlessness, are to be guided into paths of destruction and death. How great, therefore, the responsibility of governmental headship. If its power be put forth against God, it becomes the means of entailing on those who are guided by it, ruin and curse. Better not to be guided at all, than to be guided by the energies of evil; or indeed, by any of the contrivances of human thought. Governmental control is needed, but in order to be blessed,

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it must be found in association with perfectness. It must be held and administered by a hand everlastingly holy, just, and good. This it is that man's need requires. God who gives the power, must also provide a hand suited to wield it—a hand that is not only Almighty, but is also as perfect in holiness as it is in strength. Men need to be under the absolute control of One perfect in goodness and in wisdom, as well as absolute and almighty in power. And such an One God has provided in Christ. Although having been by man despised, and by Israel "abhorred," [see Isaiah xlix.] He is now hidden in the heavens, yet that withdrawal is but for a season. Soon He shall return as "King of kings and Lord of lords." Soon on all that fear His name "shall he arise as the Sun of Righteousness with healing on his wings." "He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." 2 Sam. xxii. 4. Then the earth shall be blessed and rejoice: then from the servants of Truth, sorrow and sighing shall flee away. They shall no longer be deemed as now, "the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things."

Once, and once only, was David as King of Israel permitted to rule them with wilful and disobedient hand, and so to bring them under the sore judgments of God. If one act of disobedience, a disobedience brief and soon repented of, caused Israel to be smitten so terribly, what will be the result to Israel and to

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the nations, when they shall have voluntarily placed themselves under the leadership of one who shall not only disobey, but shall avowedly defy God, shall "think to change times and laws," "shall establish mischief as by a law," and shall say, and teach others to say, of Jehovah and of Christ, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us?"

The history of David's sin is thus given in the Scripture. "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." 1 Chron. xxi. 1. Also in 2 Sam. xxiv. 1, we read, "And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah." These two statements are not, as some have imagined, irreconcileable with each other. God permitted Satan to tempt David: David was left to himself, yielded to the temptation, and sinned.

We are not told that David had done any thing to displease God before he yielded to the temptation by which he was tried. As to this, the Scripture is silent respecting David, and speaks only of Israel. "The anger of the Lord," it is said, "was moved against *Israel*." The fact, however, that David so readily yielded to the temptation of Satan, and so obstinately rejected the admonition of Joab, and others of his servants, seems to show that he had not been walking circumspectly, and with holy watchfulness before God.

It was a peculiar juncture in the history of Israel

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and of David. The ancient foes of Israel and David, after centuries of conflict, had at last succumbed: Syria, Edom, Moab, Ammon, the Philistines, Amalek, and the children of Goliath of Gath, had been so crushed by the strength of David that they attempted no longer to struggle against him: they succumbed; were despoiled; and the gold which King David brought from all these nations he dedicated unto the Lord. See 1 Chron. xviii. 11, and xx. 4. This accordingly, was the period when David wrote the eighteenth Psalm — that wondrous Psalm whose words "David spake unto the Lord in the day that the Lord had delivered him out of the hands of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul." See 2 Sam. xxii. 1. It is a Psalm true of David subordinately only and partially. He spake it prophetically. He spake it as one whose triumphs prefigured feebly the conquests of One greater than he, who shall finally come forth as Lord of lords, and King of kings, conquering and to conquer, and of whose kingdom there shall be no end. There was, however, a modified sense in which David could say, "Thou hast enlarged my steps under me; so that my feet did not slip. I have pursued mine enemies, and destroyed them; and turned not again until I had consumed them. * * * Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might destroy them that hate me. They looked, but there was none to save; even unto the Lord, but he answered them not. Then did I beat them as small as the dust of the earth, I did stamp them as the

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mire of the street, and did spread them abroad." It was a memorable epoch, therefore, in Israel's history when David spake unto the Lord the words of this Psalm.* Triumphs had been gained, and a rest attained, such as Israel had never before known. The sword was about to be sheathed; and the reign of Solomon, the Prince of Peace, was at hand. The Ark of God, ceasing from its lengthened wanderings, was no longer to dwell in curtains. The Temple was about to be built. Israel was to be gathered there in solemn and associated worship; and God's House was to be filled with His glory. It was a bright and blessed era; but it was only a type, a shadow. To those who regarded it with the eye of faith, and saw in it the foreshadowment of a yet distant future, it was an hour of holy encouragement and comfort—strengthening them towards God in patient endurance and hope: but it was a period that was capable also of being viewed *not* with the eye of faith. In that case it would become a snare.

When the feelings of nature predominate (and they always do predominate when faith is not in vigorous exercise) triumph or success, even when recognised as a gift of God's undeserved mercy, will, nevertheless, be so used as to exalt ourselves. As weeds flourish under sunshine and showers, so, when there is not watchfulness, the tendencies of our nature germinate under mercies. If foreshadowings and earnests of a coming rest are granted, such

* See this Psalm in its application to the Messiah of Israel considered in "Thoughts on parts of Isaiah," page 294.

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earnests (unless there be watchfulness and faith) will be viewed not as earnests, but as realities, causing us so to anticipate the end, that we seek to rest, and to reign, before the proper time for resting and reigning is come. David may have fallen into this snare, and may have encouraged in himself habits of thought and feeling, utterly at variance with the truth of his and Israel's actual condition —utterly inconsistent too with the fact that all the prosperity that shone around him was typical, shadowy, and transitory. To number the people was but the natural act of one who had persuaded himself to regard Israel as having entered on a period of stable and permanent rest. As to the people over whom David ruled, *they*, for the most part, were not "of faith." "The 'sons of Belial" (as David owned with his dying lips) were strong and numerous in the midst of Israel, so that it was no wonder that the signal triumphs that had been vouchsafed, should have awakened in the hearts of such, a proud and self-sufficient arrogancy that had infected the rest of Israel, and called forth the sore displeasure of God.

Even among the true servants of God in Israel there were few, if any, who were prepared to form a right estimate of Israel's past history. They failed to apprehend aright the worthlessness of the foundation on which Israel were seeking to rear the fabric of their hoped-for blessing. God only, by His own unaided power, could rear it: and after His sovereign grace had reared it, the same grace

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could alone give to them meetness to dwell therein. God must bestow: they receive. He must be the potter: they the clay. Such was the substance of the covenant of grace, which He made with Abraham when He said, "Blessing, I will bless thee:" and this Israel will recognise at last when the veil shall be taken from their heart, and they shall say, "Thou O Lord, has wrought all our works for us." כָּל Is. xxvi. 12. But as yet Israel have not understood God's methods of grace, nor apprehended their own need thereof. At Sinai they undertook to earn by the perfectness of their obedience to God, all the blessings which God in the covenant made with Abraham, had promised *freely to give.* At Sinai, Israel, so far as in them lay, abrogated the covenant of promise. For the covenant of grace, they substituted a covenant of works, and formally undertook to earn for themselves life by a meritorious obedience of their own.

God allowed them to place themselves under this covenant that they might be proved, and that their inability might be made manifest: but He did not on that account abrogate the covenant that He had made with Abraham (see Gal. iii. 17), or prove untrue to His promise and His oath. Whilst Israel, as a body, have been, year after year, earning for themselves misery and curse under their covenant of works, God on His part, has ever worked amongst them (sometimes silently, sometimes more manifestly) in the power of His covenant of grace. Throughout all the years of Israel's blindness, He

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has ever had, and ever will have amongst them, "a remnant according to the election of grace." The sacrificial and ceremonial ordinances appended to the moral Law, whilst made (like the moral Law) tests of their obedience, were also memorials and pledges of that abiding grace which all the rebellion of Israel cannot destroy—grace which shall, in due time rend from the heart of Israel the veil that darkens it, and cause them to discern the true Sacrifice and the true Priest, and make them rejoice in His salvation. "In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song: he also is become my salvation. * * * * * Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee." (Is. xii.)

The sacrifices, the incense, the Priesthood, the atonement-money, were all memorials and typical pledges of blessings to come, which God *in grace* had promised, and therefore would not revoke. David should have considered these things. The very place that he was occupying as King of Israel was a typical place assigned to him under the Abrahamic covenant *of grace*, and held by him as an earnest of the coming of the true King of Israel who should in due time appear. David should have known that Israel, whilst their relation to Sinai

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remained unchanged, could never rest otherwise than *typically*. No abiding rest, or strength, or blessing, could ever be theirs whilst as children of Hagar they drew their hopes from Sinai. Nor, when he looked on Israel, should David ever have thought of them as if they were *his* people whom he had a right to number as *his* inheritance and *his* strength. He should have thought of them as the congregation of Jehovah, Jehovah's inheritance, Jehovah's host, to be numbered only when Jehovah commanded: and more than all, he should have thought of them as Jehovah's *redeemed* inheritance—never to be numbered without a typical ransom for the soul of each being rendered unto God. "When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them. * * * * * And thou shalt take the atonement-money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the Lord, to make an atonement for your souls." (Ex. xxx. 12, 16.)

The very mention of the "atonement-money" (apart from the rendering of which Israel were never to be numbered) was sufficient to banish every feeling of pride or independency both from him who numbered, and from those who were numbered amongst the congregation of Jehovah, "for, accord-

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ing to Jehovah's fear so is his wrath."* The very fact of being His congregation appointed to draw nigh to Him and serve Him in His holiness, must entail chastisement and plague on all numbered as His people, unless atonement interpose and provide a ransom for the soul. If David unbidden, and in unholy elation of heart presumed to number Israel as if there had been in them a strength that needed not to fear any chastisement, or dread any abasement, it is no wonder that the atonement-money should have been withheld. It seems to have been utterly forgotten. No mention is made thereof. All thought respecting the atonement-money appears to have departed from David's soul. He seems not to have recollected the words, "that there be no plague among them when thou numberest them." He appears not to have recognised the need of each one in Israel bringing severally the appointed half-shekel in token that he needed a ransom for his soul. Israel was numbered, as if they could forego that protection of grace which the atonement-money signified, and stand firm on the basis of that strength which in their recent triumphs had been so marvellously exhibited. Transgressing another ordinance of Israel,† they seem to have fed

* That is, the nearer we draw nigh to Jehovah to fear and to serve Him, the more do we supply occasions for His displeasure and wrath; for the higher and holier the service, the more does our natural sinful incompetency appear.

† See Gen. xxxii. 32. We are not to feed on the sinew of our own strength, even when we recognise that strength as being wholly the gift of God. We feed on nothing in our-

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on the sinew of their own strength. Even Joab (whose eye was not very quick to see any thing according to God) discerned disobedience and danger in the step, and earnestly remonstrated. But he pleaded in vain. David was determined. In self-will he committed the sin, and entailed by it judgment on the people whom it was his privilege and his joy to guide with shepherd-care into right paths, and safe pastures. When the mind, instead of taking a comprehensive view of *all* the circumstances before it, persists in viewing them *partially* in some one favourite aspect, it is astonishing how blind it may become to things obvious as the day to every one who has no such bias to warp his judgment. David's soul, whilst absorbed in contemplating the might and triumphs of Israel, had no desire to consider other circumstances, the consideration of which would leave on the heart a sense of weakness—not of strength. David, therefore, advanced in the path that he had chosen, and sinned—grievously sinned. Yet his heart was not obdurate: his conscience was not hardened. It was sensitive, and quick to answer to the appeals of God. Accordingly, as soon as the prophet who was sent to him said, "Shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou flee three months before thine enemies, while they pursue

selves, but on something altogether external to ourselves. The altar and the shew-bread table supply us with our food, but *there* we find not the memorial of ourselves, but of another.

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thee? or that there be three days' pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me." As soon as David heard these words, he neither hardened himself, nor murmured against God, but meekly said unto the Prophet, "I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man." (2 Sam. xxiv. 13.) Accordingly the pestilence came. "The Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed."* David beheld the consequences of his deed, and was greatly bowed down. The words recorded in the historic narration of Samuel and of the Chronicles, sufficiently show the depth of his contrition. "And David's

* Or more correctly, "till the time of appointed assembly," that is, the time appointed for the meeting of Israel at the hour of the *evening sacrifice*. *Then* it was that God met David; then David worshipped in peace. Hengstenberg remarks as follows:—The calamity, according to 2 Sam. xxiv. 15, "lasted from morning till the time of *meeting*." That by this we are to understand, "the evening religious assembly," *i.e.*, "till the time of the evening sacrifice" (1 Kings xviii. 36, compared with verse 29; 2 Kings xvi. 15) is clear from the context. Of the two religious assemblies of the day, the first is excluded by the expression, "from the morning." The usual interpretation "till the time appointed," is inadmissible, for the phrase must mean some part of the day standing in opposition to the morning; and from the succeeding context, it is evident that the judgment did *not* last till the time appointed by God, but was shortened in consequence of David's repentance. Hengstenberg on the Psalms.

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heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly in that I have done: and now, I beseech thee, O Lord, take away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly." (2 Sam. xxiv. 10.) "And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the Lord stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces. And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered; even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed? but as for these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, O Lord my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on my people, that they should be plagued." Yet strong as these expressions are, the depth of the anguish experienced is perhaps still more vividly described in the Psalm of thanksgiving which he afterwards wrote in commemoration of his deliverance out of this depth of sorrow,—

Jehovah my God,
I cried unto thee,
And thou didst heal me.
Jehovah, thou hast raised away from Hades my soul,
Thou hast preserved me alive from amongst the descenders to the pit.

* * * * * *

Thou didst hide thy face,
And I became a troubled one.

* * * * * *

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What gain is there in my blood
In my descending to the pit?
Shall dust praise thee?
Shall it declare thy truth?
Hear, O Jehovah, and be gracious unto me:
O Jehovah, be a helper unto me. Ps. xxx.

Thus David committed himself into the hand of God; and he committed himself not in vain. "God had sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it; and as he was destroying, the Lord beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough; stay now thine hand. And the angel of the Lord stood by the threshing-floor of Ornan [Araunah] the Jebusite." See 2 Sam. xxiv. 16, and 1 Chron. xxi. 15.

The peaceful occupation of Araunah the Gentile (for he was a Jebusite) in quietly continuing to thresh his wheat on the floor of his own isolated garner *without* the walls of Jerusalem, stands in marked contrast with the troubled scene *within* the city, where David and the elders of Israel clothed in sackcloth fell upon their faces as they "saw the angel of the Lord stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem." Yet Araunah too was threatened; for the angel of the Lord drew nigh and stood over that peaceful threshing-floor, and the sons of Araunah saw him and fled, and hid themselves. Nevertheless, Araunah's threshing-floor the angel smote not, nor any who were therein. It was not to be a place of judgment: it was to be a place

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of forgiveness, and peace, and grace. David was commanded to go thither, and there he found forgiveness, and there he worshipped. And where was Araunah's threshing-floor? It was on Mount Moriah. This was the mountain (as its name indicates) where Jehovah appeared as Jehovah-jireh to Abraham; and where, true to that covenant name, He appeared to meet and to provide for the need of David. Could then Moriah cease to be the mountain of grace? Could Moriah ever become the mountain of judgment to David, or to any of God's believing people?

Moriah was the mountain to which Abraham went when commanded to offer up Isaac his son.* Confiding implicitly in God, even when he understood

* In Gen. xxii. 14, we read, "And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh; as it is said to this day, in the mountain of Jehovah he shall be seen," *i.e.*, seen as the provider; or as some render it [see Gesenius and Wright], "in the mountain of Jehovah it shall be provided," *i.e.*, provision shall be made. The sense is the same whichever rendering be adopted.

"Moriah," a name derived from the same root, signifies the place of appearance, *i.e.*, of the appearance of Jehovah as the provider. Hence in 2 Chron. iii. 1, we read, "Then Solomon began to build the house of Jehovah at Jerusalem in mount Moriah [the mountain of *appearance*] where there was appearance [*i.e.*, appearance of Jehovah] unto David his father, in the place David had prepared in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite." בְּהַר הַמֹּרִיָּה אֲשֶׁר נִרְאָה לְדָוִד

It should be observed that all the thoughts connected with Moriah and the provision thereon made, are to be traced back to the words of Abraham in Gen. xxii. 8, "my son, God will provide for himself [יִרְאֶה־לּוֹ] a lamb for a burnt offering."

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not the reason of His commands, Abraham was guided to Moriah, in order that he might there give full proof of his faith and of his obedience—faith and obedience being the two great endowments which God's grace had specially bestowed on Abraham. But God had not called His servant to Moriah, merely that Abraham might there be honoured by manifesting the steadfastness of his faith, and the unhesitating unreservedness of his obedience. This trial of Abraham was to be made the occasion of unfolding to Abraham, and through him to us, a knowledge of God's ways in grace, greater far than any that Abraham had ever yet attained. Abraham was not only commanded to give up his son to death, but he was also charged himself to slay him; and for three days the weight of the anticipated sorrow was allowed to rest on Abraham's soul. Here was a sore and prolonged trial of Abraham's faith. Yet God intended not that Abraham should know the anguish of actually giving to his son the fatal blow. The altar was prepared; Isaac was bound; the knife was ready; and the hand of Abraham was stretched out to take it, but God interposed, and the knife was sheathed. Abraham was spared the agony of giving the fatal blow. But when the hour should at last come for God to give up the Son of His own bosom whom He loved with a love compared with which Abraham's love to Isaac was but as nothing—when that hour should come, God intended not either to spare Himself, or to spare His Son. Had Isaac died, his death would have been

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comparatively painless; the time would have been short; the struggle little. But God was about to appoint His Son—the Son of His bosom—to a prolonged life of reproach and aggravated grief: and His life of sorrow was to be followed by a lingering death of agony by crucifixion—agony which although intense was as nothing to the unseen agony which He was to endure whilst He drank the cup of veritable wrath—the cup of wrath which (because of the claims of God's governmental holiness, founded on His own essential hatred of sin) it was necessary that the Redeemer should drink, if Abraham, or Isaac, or we, were to be saved. "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him, and to put him to grief." His soul was made "an offering for sin." Faith, therefore, looking back to Moriah, accepts the lesson it teaches, and says, "He that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all [all believers], how shall he not with him also freely give us all things."

But this was not the only lesson taught on Moriah. Can we gaze on Isaac bound with the cords, the fire kindled, and the knife prepared—can we think of him thus, without being reminded of a condition that pertained unto him, and pertains unto us as sinners? God demands perfectness: we have none. He demands that there should be no sin, no transgression found either in us or in our ways: but transgression and sin are the unvarying characteristics of our condition as men. We deserve, therefore, to be bound with the cords of judicial death

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and to be consigned for ever to the fire that never shall be quenched. And this must have been our doom, if God, as Jehovah-jireh, had not intervened, and provided a victim to be substituted in our room. In Isaac, therefore, unbound and restored to the joyful liberty of life, (a victim having been by God provided to bear in his room the stroke of death, and leaving as the result of that death the sweet savour of its own acceptableness to rest on the head of Isaac for ever) — in Isaac thus restored, we are taught on Moriah another lesson. We learn the blessedness of the redeemed, as having had appointed for them a substituted victim, through whose atoning death God has provided eternal reconciliation.

Deep must have been the joy of Abraham, when, relieved of his anguish, he found himself in the presence of God, honoured because of the stedfastness of his faith, strengthened by increased acquaintance with the methods of God's grace, and comforted by the renewed assurance of future mercies. Yet, Abraham, although through God's grace obedient and for his obedience honoured, was, nevertheless, not perfect. His course was not faultless. One dark thread of mistrustfulness, leading to deceit and falsehood had been interwoven from the beginning with his history. See Gen xii. 11, and xx. 13. In the history of Hezekiah afterwards, we read that God left him for a season to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart. So was it with Abraham. He too was to be allowed to supply practical attestation to the truth, that "in the flesh

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there dwelleth no good thing." Abraham therefore, even as others, *deserved* the fire and the knife of judgment, and consequently needed like all his brethren, to be shrouded by the sweet savour of a burnt-offering altar, supplied with its sacrifice by the provision of God. How far a consciousness of this need was present to Abraham's heart when he uttered the words, "Jehovah-jireh," we cannot say. We may be very sure that he has learned to appreciate these words now, and will prove the blessedness of them in eternity for ever. In leaving Moriah, he left it as one honoured, instructed, comforted. He approached it in stedfastness of obedience; he left it in stedfastness of joy.

Far different were the circumstances that marked the path of David as he approached Moriah. He came there, not because, like Abraham, he had been obeying God; he came there as one whom disobedience had encompassed with sorrow, judgment, and death. He came clothed in sackcloth; bowed down not merely by anguish, but by anguish caused by the consciousness of the guilt of his transgression. He came because he saw the sword of the angel of the Lord drawn against him and his people. He came as a "troubled one," Ps. xxx.; as one who needed to be saved from being "amongst the descenders to the pit." Ps. xxx. Abraham was afflicted, but how different was the sorrow of the consciously-obedient Abraham from the sorrow of the consciously-guilty David?

Nevertheless, David found on Moriah the same

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God that had there met Abraham, a God whose compassion failed not. Not in vain had "Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh [Jehovah will provide]: as it is said to this day, In the mountain of Jehovah provision shall be." God had there provided for Abraham. There also God provided for David. The same grace that could provide a substitute for Isaac, could provide a substitute for David. The same grace that had placed Abraham and Isaac under the acceptableness of a sacrifice of sweet smelling savour, could place the same protection and the same acceptableness upon the guilty head of David. And this God did. The sweet-smelling savour of accepted sacrifice again ascended from Moriah. "David built there an altar unto the Lord and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the Lord; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering." 1 Chron. xxi. 26. When David met God David was in sackcloth: but God met His servant in pardoning mercy, not in judgment, and David could say, "Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and clothed me with gladness. Weeping had sojourned for the night, but exultation had come in the morning."

However great the joy that accompanies the steps of conscious obedience, it falls short of that joy which hearts repentant and contrite feel when, after having been chastened and ploughed as it were, by anguish, they meet God as David met Him on Moriah — to receive unmerited forgiveness, and not

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forgiveness merely, but blessing also. Moriah was to David a place of peace, but it was not a place of peace only, it was likewise a place of honour and of blessing; for *there* David built an altar and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings; *there* the Lord answered him by fire from heaven; *there* he was commissioned (not indeed to build but) to prepare for the building of God's House, and to say, "This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel." 1 Chron. xxii. 1: and for the dedication of that House he was caused to write that Psalm of mingled confession and praise to which I have before referred. Surely there can be no joy so deep as the joy of one who, after having as a servant of the Lord failed (it may be grievously) is brought back chastened, humbled, and contrite, to receive not only forgiveness, but also the honour of being again allowed to serve that God whom, and whose service his soul loveth. Glory too vast, too transcendant for our hearts at present to conceive, will surround the saints of God when the hour of their final triumph will have come. Out of the midst of that cloud of glory, the dwelling place of the redeemed, the voice of praise and of thanksgiving will issue, and heaven as it listens will recognise in it a depth and a fulness such as it never heard before. It will be the praise and the thanksgiving of redeemed sinners, fully conscious of that *from* which they have been delivered, fully conscious of that *whereunto* they have been brought, —darkness, woe, sin, judgment past; light, joy, holi-

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ness, honour come. Hence the words with which the Psalm to which I have referred, concludes.

Thou hast put off my sackcloth and girded me with gladness, That so GLORY may sing praise to thee, and not be silent; O Jehovah, my God, I will give thanks to thee for ever.

Mercy like that shown unto David in delivering him "from amongst those that go down into the pit," in putting off his sackcloth and girding him with gladness, — mercy like unto this, shall finally make GLORY vocal with the voice of ceaseless thanksgiving; for GLORY shall be the home, the dwelling place of redeemed, rescued, delivered sinners — men who will have proved to an extent and in a fulness that David knew not, these very mercies, which, when in the way of foreshadowment only they met him, caused him to say, "O Jehovah, my God, I will give thanks to thee for ever." Therefore "GLORY" shall be the home, the dwelling place of praise. It shall not be dumb. It shall give thanks unto God for ever.

Moriah, the mountain where the Lord appeared as the One that discerned and provided for the need of His people, was henceforth to be the place of the Lord's House. There Jehovah was to dwell as the Dispenser of blessings established in the power of sacrifice. There He was to make Himself known to His people. There He was to be consulted: there worshipped. Up to this time Moriah had been *without* the gates of Jerusalem. Neglected (might I not say despised?) by Israel and by Jerusalem, it

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had become the possession of Araunah a Gentile,—but a Gentile who feared and worshipped the Jehovah of Israel. On Moriah, Araunah the Jebusite, surrounded by sheaves gathered from the land of Israel, was peacefully threshing the stores of his garner, whilst terror, judgment and death, were overspreading Jerusalem. But when David and the elders of Israel came humbly in sackcloth to Moriah and found there forgiveness and peace, the type changed. Moriah was to be no longer a place forgotten and outcast. It was to be incorporated into Jerusalem: it was to be linked to Zion, the citadel of strength. The Temple of the Lord was to be reared there, and Israel's burnt-offering altar was to be placed there. But all this was typical and transitory. Law, not grace, was the foundation on which it stood. The Hagar-covenant of works, not the Sarah-covenant of promise, was still Israel's hope. Therefore all has vanished: and although the antitypical blessing prefigured and pledged by the sacrifice on Moriah, has come (for the one oblation has been once and for ever offered), yet both it, and the acceptance, and peace that flow therefrom have been by Israel despised, and have, like the typical Moriah, become the inheritance of the Araunahs that may be found among the Gentiles. Many indeed among the Gentiles profess to be as Araunah. But they are not. They may recognise the grace of Moriah in word: but they recognise it only to pervert, or to betray. There are few Araunahs. Nevertheless, there is, and there

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shall be to the end, a remnant who prize the grace provided on Moriah, and who, in the power of that grace, worship — who gather into their garners sheaves reaped from the fields of Israel, and peacefully on Moriah thresh out and feed on that which they have gathered. And when the closing hour of Israel's unregenerate history shall have come, and when Satan shall have raised up over Israel a head of wickedness, who, moulding and directing all their energies, shall bring them into direct conflict with God, and when God's destroying glory shall appear, there shall, at that hour, be still some on earth who, like Araunah abiding in his garner on Moriah, shall stand unmoved and unharmed though heaven and earth tremble. The place of Moriah-grace, which the Araunahs of earth will have solitarily occupied, will begin to be recognised in all its preciousness by the spared remnant of Israel there, and will become the place of their joy, their worship, and of their glory. Israel and Jerusalem, clothed in sackcloth, shall (to use typical language) appreciate and own the value of the threshing-floor on Moriah in that day: in other words, they shall apprehend the preciousness of that grace which God has twice manifested on Moriah, and they shall bow down and worship. "Then peace shall flow down to them as a river: glory shall dwell in Emanuel's land, and the ends of the earth shall see God's salvation." The sons of Belial, whom David could not quell, shall be crushed for ever then. The true King of Israel shall have come to reign as Jehovah of

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Hosts in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously,—heaven being His Throne; the earth His footstool, and Jerusalem the city of the great King. Israel shall again be numbered then by their rightful Lord and possessor. "Of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her, and the highest himself shall establish her. Jehovah shall count when he writeth up the people that this man was born there." Ps. lxxxvii. 5. The atonement money will not be forgotten then. The perfectness and the preciousness of the one oblation once offered will in that day be fully recognised; for the true Melchisedek, the *Priest*-King, will have come forth, accompanied by all the results of His accomplished sacrifice. The desire of the heart of David the King will be fully satisfied then. The sorrow that sojourned during the night, and the joy and exultation of the morning without clouds will have come. Such will be the result of the sorrows of that day which shall cause repentant Israel to find their resting place, and to rear the altar of their worship on the threshing-floor on Moriah, which they have abandoned to the Gentile stranger. The coming therefore, of David, clothed in sackcloth, to the threshing-floor of Araunah on Moriah, is an event, the record of which stands forth in the midst of the earth's present darkness and woe, as a lamp kindled of God to illumine the eye of faith during this night of sorrow, and shedding upon the now not distant future, a light and a radiancy of joy, triumph and glory that shall never again wane.

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NOTES ON PSALM XXX.

THE title of this Psalm should be translated thus: "A Psalm. A song of dedication of THE HOUSE —[a Psalm] of David."

The ordinary translation, by connecting the words, "*of David*" with "*House*," instead of with "*Psalm*," has given rise to the false notion that this Psalm has reference to the King's own indwelling; whereas "the house" as an absolute phrase, can only mean the House of God. *Alexander on Psalms.* See also *Hengstenberg and De Burgh.*

The words of David, 1 Chron. xxii. 1, are sufficient to determine the question. "Then David said, This is the house of the Lord God, [referring to Araunah's threshing-floor] and this the altar of the burnt offering for Israel."

The Psalm may be literally translated thus:—

I. I will extol thee, O Jehovah;
For thou hast drawn me up [as from a pit]
And hast not caused my foes to rejoice in respect of me.

Thou hast drawn me up] As from a deep well or pit. See דלה thus used in Ex. ii. 16, and Prov. xx. 5. David had consciously experienced what it was to be cast down as into a deep, dark, and terrible pit: but he was drawn out of it by the faithful

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hand of his Heavenly Friend. Experimental realization of the joy of deliverance contrasted with intensity of previous anguish is the characteristic of this Psalm.

My foes] Satan, evil spirits, and Satan's servants among men—these are the foes, all ready to rejoice at the sorrows, disasters, and chastisements, of those who serve and fear God. When the children of God stumble, then it is that "the foes" rejoice and magnify themselves.

II. Jehovah, my God,
I cried unto thee,
And thou healedst me.

III. Jehovah, thou hast raised away from Hades my soul,
Thou hast kept me alive from amongst the goers down to the pit.

The intensity of David's sufferings are vividly pourtrayed in these verses. His clothing outwardly was sackcloth ; but this was but a feeble expression of the depth of his inward suffering. The King of Israel, he whose distinctive place it was to uphold the ordinances of the God of Israel, had himself violated those ordinances, and had caused Israel to violate them likewise — and that too, whilst he and Israel were professing to serve God according to the principles revealed at Sinai. David, therefore, was caused in no ordinary degree to feel and to own the chastening hand of God. But David was not as Saul. He was truly "*of faith*," and therefore was one of Abraham's children according to the Spirit.

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Consequently, the grace of the Abrahamic covenant, which the Law could not disannul, intervened on his behalf, and David was delivered from going down into the pit. The realization of the danger and woe, contrasted with the realization of the joy and security unto which he was rescued, gives to this Psalm its character. Such will be the realization of the redeemed when they enter into their glory.

IV. Sing unto Jehovah, ye his saints,
And give thanks in commemoration of his holiness.
V. For a moment is [spent] in his anger;
Life in his favour:
At evening time may come as a sojourner, WEEPING,
But in the morning there is SHOUTING.

The contrasts in this passage should be noted. Anger, favour. A moment, everlasting life. Evening, when weeping enters to *sojourn*; morning when joy cometh to *abide*.

VI. But I had said in my security,
I shall not be moved for ever.
VII. Jehovah, in thy good pleasure
Thou hast made to stand for my mountain, STRENGTH.

This verse discloses the secret of David's fall. Although he had not forgotten God, and had not ascribed his triumphs to the strength of his own hand, but had ascribed them to the favour of God, he nevertheless thought that God had in His good pleasure, brought him to a mountain of abiding strength — strength never to be overthrown. He felt, therefore, as one who had reached a city of

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habitation whence he might look back upon insecurity, and toil, and conflict, as things that had passed away. He had mistaken type for reality; shadow for substance. He had failed to appreciate the difference between Hagar and Sarah; Sinai and Zion.

Thou didst hide thy face,
And I became a troubled one.

A troubled one] נִבְהָל, here used in the Niphal participle, is a strong word to denote the confusion and amazement caused by terror or calamity. See Ex. xv. 15. "Then the dukes of Edom shall be *amazed*" —i.e. from terror. See also 1 Sam. xxviii. 21; "And the woman [the witch of Endor] came unto Saul and saw that he was sore *troubled*." And Job iv. 5; "But now it is come upon thee and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art *troubled*." It is a word which indicates a condition of feeling the very reverse of that which had caused him to say, "Thou, O Jehovah, hast made to stand for my mountain *strength*."

VIII. Unto thee, O Jehovah, will I call,
And unto Jehovah will I supplicate.

IX. What gain [is there] in my blood?
In my descending to the pit?
Shall there praise thee DUST?
Shall *it* tell forth thy truth?

X. Hear, O Jehovah, and be gracious unto me;
O Jehovah, be a helper unto me.

We read on another occasion, at Ziklag, when David was greatly distressed, for the people spake

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of stoning him, that "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." 1 Sam. xxx. 6. So likewise here. He sought for refuge to God; and God's faithfulness failed him not. He asked God to be gracious unto him, and He was gracious. He asked that God would be a strength unto him, and he was strengthened. The sorrow that had sojourned with him as for a night, passed: and joy entered, that was to remain.

XI. Thou hast turned my lament into a dance for me;
Thou hast loosed my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness;

XII. In order that GLORY may sing Psalms to thee,
And not be silent.
O Jehovah my God,
I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

With thoughts like these shall the saints enter into their glory — and all because of SACRIFICE. "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." Very precious, therefore, is the lesson that faith learns at the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.

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THOUGHTS

ON PARTS OF

THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

BY

BENJAMIN WILLS NEWTON.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE five papers contained in this volume were originally published in the four parts of "Occasional Papers on Scriptural Subjects" (1863-1866), one of which has been out of print for some time. Their author, the late Mr. B. W. Newton, began to revise them with a view to republication, but only finished the first. His alterations have been incorporated here, and it will be seen upon comparison that not a single statement of fact or of opinion was altered; only here and there a felicitous turn of the sentence or a more concise expression was given. In the remaining four papers only the obvious press errors have been corrected. The whole are now sent forth with the hope that the Lord may be pleased to bless them to the instruction and comfort of His own people.

August, 1906.

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On the Song of Solomon.

I.

From Verse 5 to 11 of Chapter I.

Many parts of the word of God have for their object the direction of our minds to that first great act of His mercy in providing the redemption that is in Christ, whereby, whilst continuing just, and upholding the claims of His own holy government, He is able to receive sinners and to pardon them, and to impute to them the value of the blood of Jesus, and to know them as a covenant God, in love and in grace, for evermore. Nor is the fulness of this grace greater than the freedom of its proclamation. It is proclaimed to sinners *as sinners*. God "preaches peace by Jesus Christ." The proclamation is not limited. It was a mingled multitude to whom the Apostle said, "Men and brethren, through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and through him all who believe are justified from all things."

Again, there are other parts of Scripture which

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teach us of the exceeding greatness of the glory and heavenly blessing, into which all, who are of faith, are already brought, in virtue of their union with Him who is now their Representative in glory, as He was once their Representative in death. Even whilst personally in this earth and knowing many sorrows, we have a *representative* existence in the heavens; and there, all is glory. "Blessed," says the Apostle, "be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessing (εὐλογίᾳ πνευματικῇ) in heavenly places in Christ":* and again, "seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Thus that wondrous power of life and glory which is to be actually ours at our Lord's return, when, in the twinkling of an eye, we are to be changed into His risen likeness,

* The "spiritual blessing" spoken of in this verse does not mean blessing communicated to us through the Spirit *here*—for they are defined as being "in heavenly places in Christ." "Spiritual" refers to that character of glorified existence which Christ now hath above the heavens—His body and all the characteristics of His condition being spiritual or "according to the spirit" (κατὰ πνεῦμα) —we in Him being endowed with the same spiritual condition of glorious being. In the next dispensation, Israel, when converted, will be able to bless God, not only for having given them "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," but *also* for having granted them blessings in the earth beneath, for they shall be "blessed in basket and in store, blessed in their going out and in their coming in"—sorrow and sighing having fled away. The outward condition of God's people then will be sabbatical. Creation shall no longer groan in the bondage of corruption. Yet, however blessed on earth, the people of God will still wait expectantly for the higher blessings of the "eighth day," when they shall join their brethren that have gone before in glory above the heavens.

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is only the *manifestation* of that which is already our heritage *in Him*. Already, as represented by our Substitute, we have judicially died: already, *in Him*, we are "seated in heavenly places": already to us, so regarded, "old things have passed away." Such is the present heritage of all the family of faith. Daily, therefore, we have to remember this, our *representative* existence above; daily to "arm ourselves" with this mind.

But this is not all. The Scripture having thus, as it were, taken us to heaven, descends with us into the earth again. For a season we are left in this earth to fight the fight of faith; to walk by faith and not by sight. Accordingly, many parts of Scripture pertain to the period of our present militancy, and of such parts, the Song of Solomon is one.

The Song of Solomon speaks of one, who, pardoned, accepted and loved, by her heavenly Bridegroom, with a "love that many waters cannot quench," is left during His absence, in the midst of the shadows and darkness of this present night of evil, surrounded by many adversaries and many dangers—to have as her characteristic dwelling-place, the valley or the lowly cottage, and to find her occupation either in the vineyard (chap. ii. 15), or in the garden (chap. iv. 13), or at the sheepfolds (chap. i. 8); far away from the streets and palaces of man's City: for what place for the vine, or for pleasant plants of fragrance, or for the sheepfold,

could be there? Neither the glory nor the rest of the City of man's greatness was to be hers. She was to be "without the gate"; to sojourn where His Truth sojourned. So, and so only, was she to receive the present sanction of her Lord and tokens from Him of practical fellowship with her in her ways. There were occasions on which she wandered disobediently into the City and rested, or tried to rest, in its palaces—and she lost Him. There were other occasions when she kept by the sheepfolds, or sought the valley where the lilies grew—and she found Him.

The Song of Solomon, therefore, is pre-eminently a *practical* part of Scripture. Its object is not to treat of our pardon or the certainty of our acceptance. *That* is throughout the Song *assumed*. How could it be doubted that one espoused to Christ, and loved with a love stronger than death was accepted? The object of this Song is neither to teach us respecting the way of acceptance in Christ, nor to teach us respecting the certainty of such acceptance. Its object is to mark the path of the accepted: to shew the way that it beseems *them* to follow, who are loved with a love from which nothing can separate. The object of this Song is not to show that the spouse of Christ is safe—*that* she is and must be. It is to show that whilst there is a path in which she may walk and find sorrow, dishonour and travail of spirit; there is also another path in which she may find joy, peace and present

practical communion with her Lord. She was right only as long as she eschewed the rest, and honour, and habits of man's City, and was content to be as one who had gone without the gate, bearing reproach.

There are, indeed, intimations in this Song of the coming of another and still future period, when this present season of sorrowing militancy is to give place to a far different hour. The night is not to be for ever: shadows and darkness are not always to prevail. The "City" is not always to be the symbol of ways, and thoughts, and manners, adverse to God and to His Truth. When the day of man shall have passed and the "morning without clouds" have come, "the City of the great King" having for her walls salvation, and for her gates praise, and for her name, "Jehovah is there," shall be established in the earth as the centre of truth and righteousness and peace to all nations. Then "the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount *Zion*, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously." In this Song there are not a few incidental allusions to that coming hour when the anti-typical Solomon shall come forth in the glory of His strength—"His chariot paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem"—when Israel as "the Shulamite" (*i.e.* the bride of Solomon) shall succeed into the recipiency, not indeed of the sorrows, but of the love at present known by that outcast stranger whom "the daughters of Jerusalem" recognise not

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—whom they seldom notice except to despise. But such prophetic allusions to the future are incidental only. The Song of Songs (for "wine is for them who are of heavy heart") is God's gift to *us* in this present dispensation of sorrow. It ceases as soon as "the day breaks and the shadows flee away." It is a song intended exclusively for that night of evil, during which the beloved of Christ is a wanderer and a stranger in a world that knows her not.

In the passage before us, she finds herself in the presence of the daughters of man's City, exposed to their unkindly and contemptuous gaze. Sensitively conscious—too sensitively conscious, of their scorn, she thus endeavours to explain and justify her position. "I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept." Such was her appeal to the daughters of Jerusalem.

The words, "I am black," have no reference (although by many so explained) * to that blackness and deformity of evil that marks our natural

* Thus Augustine, "Nigra per naturam formosa per gratiam—Black by nature, beautiful by grace"—and Ambrose. followed by many others. To interpret the Song on this principle would be utterly to destroy its object.

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condition as men. True indeed it is, that the Ethiopian's skin is but a feeble type of the moral blackness that marks inwardly and outwardly all that we naturally are; and true it is that unless the comeliness of the heavenly robe of Christ's righteousness were thrown around us, we should be left in defilement and "filthy rags," for ever. But this passage speaks not of that kind of blackness, which, in the case of believers, grace has for ever put away. She speaks not here of that blackness, but of another far different, which, however despised by those who (like the daughters of Jerusalem) view things only in the light of man's day, is comeliness and beauty in the estimation of her heavenly Lord. "I am black in your sight: but comely in His sight, O ye daughters of Jerusalem. Look not disdainfully on me because I am black, because the sun has looked on me and blackened me. If my lot had been as your lot; if, like you, sheltered and cherished in the City, I had known the rest and protection of its halls and palaces—if its ways and habits had been mine, I should then have been safe from the scorching of the sun and the beating of the storm, and this blackness would not have been found upon me. Yet despise me not because of it. In this I do but resemble the tents of Kedar and the curtains of Solomon. They too are set to meet the burning of the noontide heat, and the fury of the midnight storm, and they like me are blackened. But are they despised for that

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blackness and counted as nothing worth? Is it not deemed an evidence rather that they have discharged the office they were appointed to fulfil? So is it with me. Early I became as a stranger unto my mother's children. They were angry with me. They said, she is not as one of us; we have no fellowship in her ways. Let us drive her from our father's mansion, and send her far away into distant vineyards. There let her dwell: there let her labour. So I was sent to the vineyards. But I have not laboured for myself; I have not kept any vineyard of my own. I have cherished no grapes to fill my own cup with wine. The vines on which I have laboured have not been my own vines: the sheepfolds which I have tended have not been my own sheepfolds. They have been the sheepfolds and vineyards of my Lord: for I have heard and followed His voice: and therefore I have been exposed to the beating of the storm; and therefore the sun has looked upon me; and therefore has come this blackness which ye despise. I am black* in your sight, but comely in His sight, O ye daughters of Jerusalem."

* Some understand "curtains," in this passage, as the symbol of that which is costly and beautiful as the curtains of a palace: in which case the meaning would be "black as the tents of Kedar, but comely, in my Lord's sight, as the curtains of the palace of Solomon." But "curtains" in Jer. iv. 20 and x. 20, and Isa. liv. 2, evidently mean the covering of a tent. "There is none to stretch forth my tent any more and to set up my curtains," Jer. x. 20. I understand it, therefore, to mean that the preciousness of the blackened curtains of Solomon's tent is to be estimated by the

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There was a time once when the Church of God had much of this honourable blackness. It marked in an especial manner the great Apostle of the Gentiles, and he counted it precious. "I," said he, "bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" —marks, that is, of many a suffering that has come upon me for His name's sake. He found, in manifold ways, toil, danger, sorrow and reproach for Christ's sake. How strong the words of his own description: "we are made as the filth of the world; the offscouring of all things unto this day." The offence of the Cross and the reproach of the Truth, prepared for him many a cup of sorrow. And there were some, who, like Clement, and Timothy, and the Philippians, shared with him these sufferings, and partook of the reproach of this blackness. But it was far otherwise with many even of those who knew and who prized the Gospel of the grace of God. The Corinthians prized the

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value of their service in protecting him who rests beneath them. The Sept. renders ὡς δέρρεις Σολωμών "as the skins of Solomon" —and the Vulgate in the same way, *sicut pelles Solomonis*, showing that they understood the passage to refer to the external coverings of the tent.

On the words, "Look not upon me because I am black," Gill observes—"She had said this before, but here she uses the same word in another form, which some think is to diminish the signification of it, and that she was not so black as they thought her to be, and read it *blackish*, or *somewhat black*; though the doubling of the radicals seems rather to increase the signification, as in other places, as Ps. xlv. 5, and therefore should be read, 'I am *very black*, or *exceeding black*. Valde fusca. *Bochart*. Prorsus vel valde et tota nigra.' *Marckius*."

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Gospel; but they loved not its separation nor its reproach. Whilst the Apostle was despised, they sought "before the time, to reign as kings." They had no desire to "go without the gate"; they wished rather to settle in the City of man, and, if possible, to control it. Their sympathies were not with her whose place, and whose service, and whose "blackness" the Lord approved. Their sympathies were well nigh with her persecutors. They were almost, as to their feelings, one, and, but for grace would actually have become one, with "the daughters of Jerusalem."

It should cost us little effort to apprehend who they are, whom "the daughters of Jerusalem" denote. The daughters of Jerusalem are they who are under the tutelage and control of those who are afterwards denominated in this Song, "keepers of the wall"—*i.e.*, the wall of man's City. From the time that the Apostles died, there have been in the professing Church, multitudes who have sought to elevate Truth, or that which they have called Truth, into the place of worldly dignity and honour. Without adopting *all* the principles of the halls of Caiaphas, or of Cæsar, they have coveted their dignity and loved their glory. Ecclesiastical and secular greatness have been the idols before which they have bowed down and worshipped. They have desired for their "Zion" as they have called it, that "Kings should be its nursing fathers, and their Queens its nursing mothers," forgetting that while

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the vail rests on Israel's heart, the hour of Truth's triumph cannot come. Impatient of the garb of Nazareth, not willing to own that at present "the foundations of all things are out of course," they wish that Truth should be exalted *now*—that *now* "the glory of the nations should come to it as a flowing stream." Accordingly, they labour to maintain, and to strengthen, and to guard, the walls of the City of man. The prosperity of that City is their prosperity; its glory, their glory. Its melodies delight them: the rest of its dwelling-places is the rest which their souls covet. And if, perchance, they behold any *so* awakened to a sense of the coming doom of this City of man's strength, as to quit it, and to go without the gate led by the voice of Truth, they persecute—unless, indeed, it suit better their Gallio-like indifference to sit still and to deride. Bitterness is not confined to the active persecutor; it is often found even in greater intensity in those who sit in the seat of the scorner and mock. Are we then numbered among the keepers of the walls of this City? Are our energies and talents and powers devoted to upholding the strength of the City of man's present greatness? Or, have we, in a more quiet and less prominent sphere, become, like the daughters of Jerusalem, imprisoned within barriers which other hands have reared, so as to be made the unreflecting instruments of others' will? Responsibility is not destroyed by the listless docility of willing ignorance.

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Are we numbered among either of these two classes? Or are we "without the gate?"

There may be occasions when they who have gone without the gate have opportunity to testify to "the daughters of Jerusalem," or even to the keepers of the walls of the City: but to testify is not to apologize. To speak in the power of Truth and of grace to men's consciences (for truth and grace are to be combined in our testimony), is very different from seeking to commend our ways to men's natural judgments with the view either of averting their contempt, or of disarming their enmity. Whenever the servant of Christ sinks into the place of a mere apologist, it shows that his faith has lost its proper energy and its right power of discernment. This was, in measure, the case with this faithful one of Christ, when she thus addressed the daughters of Jerusalem. Her words had far more the tone of apology than of testimony. She appears rather as one pleading at the bar of human judgment, than as one standing simply in the presence of her Lord. Her eye was fixed on them, rather than on Him. Accordingly, as soon as she had ceased, and before any reply could be returned by those to whom she had spoken, she suddenly remembers her Lord, and finds that while occupied in this appeal to the stranger, she had, in a measure, wandered from the footsteps of His flock. "Tell me," were her words, "tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I

be as one that turneth aside from the flocks of thy companions?" These words plainly intimate that she was not as near as she might have been, and as she had been wont to be, to the presence of her Lord. She had, for the moment, lost Him. Whilst she had been parleying with strangers and vindicating her ways to them, He had moved on with His companions and was feeding His flock, she knew not exactly where. Yet it was not that she had really wandered. She had merely tarried on the way, and that but for an instant; and the ready earnestness of her enquiry plainly showed, that desire after her Lord and the place which He practically occupied, had never ceased to be uppermost in her soul. She had no desire except to be found *with* Him. This He knew. Accordingly, He instantly replied to her appeal, and did not, as on some subsequent occasions, delay His answer—mingling, however, with that answer, a slight measure of reproof. "If thou knowest not, O thou fairest among women"—as if to say, "Is it indeed true that thou knowest not? How is it that thou knowest not?" His words conveyed reproof; and her conscience doubtless recognised that it was deserved. But the knowledge for which she asked was given. "If thou knowest not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents. *There* I abide. *There* thou wilt find thyself *with* me."

Thus then "the shepherds' tents" is the object

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pointed out to us to guide our steps, and to fix the bounds of our habitation in the midst of the world's dark wilderness. We have to seek out where the meet ministration of Truth to the sheep of Christ is being carried on, and there we have to dwell or to sojourn—for if Truth merely sojourns, we have to sojourn likewise. We have to remember too, that there is a fulness and completeness and harmony in Truth as revealed in God's holy word, and that it may suffer as much from mutilation as from corruption. Truth, therefore, in its integrity, is to be sought: and wherever our consciences tell us that its streams (or it may be, its streamlets) flow; wherever true shepherds of Christ minister in faithfulness His word, that is the spot in the wide wilderness which we have to seek; and there we find Christ. The place of His Truth is, and ever will be, *His* place. Have we then this practical fellowship with the Truth—or do other interests, or friendships, or associations, bind us? It is possible that the palace of Saul, even though it be the centre and spring of the corruptions of Israel, may be dearer to us than the cave of Adullam—for the cave of Adullam has its sorrows, and we may shun them.

It was otherwise with this faithful one of Christ. She heard His voice, and she followed. And there she found not only quiet peaceful tents in which to rest: but she found employment too. "Go and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents." There were

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"kids" dependent on her care, part doubtless of the flock of her Lord—hers not in title of possession, but as being the subjects of her care. They who through God's grace show faithfulness and energy in cleaving to the Truth, are ever made channels of blessing to others weaker or less instructed than themselves. To receive, and also to communicate, are the characteristic blessings of all who seek to abide near the footsteps of the great Shepherd of the sheep. Such was the place of her who is the subject of this Song. She stood, herself a shepherdess, among the shepherds' tents; there finding herself the object not only of the love, but of the approval of her Lord, who communed with her, and spoke to her of another and far different scene, where the lowly garb of the shepherdess should be exchanged for the stateliness and majesty of royalty and glory.

"I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots. Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold. We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver." Such were the words with which this lowly shepherdess was suddenly addressed by her Lord. What could be more contrasted, than the royal pomp and pageantry of the proud King of Egypt, and the condition of this wanderer in the wilderness, surrounded by her kids, few and feeble? "Every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians." There scarcely can be a contrast more marked and more vivid, than that which subsists

between the service of the sheepfold, and all that Egypt honours. Yet which will be found the place of honour when the day of man ends, and the day of God comes? Already we have had many a typical intimation of the greatness of the change to be wrought in that coming day of visitation—as when Moses was summoned from tending his flock in the wilderness, and set in that place of wondrous power before which Egypt quailed and fell: or as when David was chosen and "taken from the sheepfolds. From following the ewes great with young, the Lord brought him to feed Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance." Yet not so sudden or so marvellous, in either of these cases, was the change, as will be that coming operation of God's power, whereby they who have been hitherto outcasts from Egypt, and strangers often to their mother's children, will suddenly be surrounded by a glory and a majesty which the pageantry of earth may symbolize, but cannot express. As truly as the proud ones of earth—the mighty monarchs of this Egyptian world, have lavished their riches in adorning the ministers and instruments of their triumphs, so truly, soon and suddenly, shall the King of kings and Lord of lords from the resources of His own heavenly glory, clothe with brightness and majesty greater than eye hath seen, or ear heard, those, who, at present, strangers in a world that knows them not, shall then be manifested as being what they are, "heirs of God, and joint-

heirs with Christ," and be known as ministers to His majesty, and fall into the train of His glory, and constitute the adornment of His triumph. When, at the hour of the earth's deepest darkness, the earthen pitchers shall be suddenly broken, and the light hidden within them shall shine forth, the true meaning of the words, "Christ in you, the hope of glory" will then (when it is too late) burst in upon the conscience of an affrighted and stricken world. The despised shepherdess was reminded of this her destined glory: reminded of it by her Lord, in order that she might be comforted and encouraged during the hour of her endurance and sorrow. But would she have been thus reminded if she had been as one that had turned aside from "the flocks of his companions"? There were afterwards occasions when we read of her in the City—apart from her Lord—her hands and her fingers dropping with sweet smelling myrrh, in the rest and shelter of a palace, whilst His unsheltered head was "filled with dew, and His locks with the drops of the night"; but we read of no remembrances of glory then. So much has right position to do, not indeed with the *possession* of the Lord's love (that is secured to us on the ground of His own sovereign grace), but with the present manifestations of that love—such manifestations, I mean, as show His sanction of our ways and His fellowship with us in them, a fellowship which, through His grace, is made dependent neither on

the degree of our strength nor on the extent of our progress; for, where there is straight-forward honesty of purpose in the right way, He "will not quench the smoking flax," or "despise the day of small things."

Such, then, as I believe, is the general character of the instruction which this interesting passage is intended to convey. May we have grace to receive it in simplicity, and not seek to turn aside the edge of its truth for the sake of vindicating our own consistency. If a path *be* honourable, let us pronounce it honourable, whether we have grace to walk in it or not. On the other hand, we must beware of imaginative notions, and not deceive ourselves by ideal pictures of pilgrim life. Imagination, when uncontrolled by fact and by the clear testimonies of the revealed Truth, has often been a grievous snare to God's people. A day of weakness like the present (one of which the Lord Himself said, that because of the abounding of iniquity "the love of the greater part" (*τῶν πολλῶν*) even of His own people would "wax cold") is a period in which we find ourselves exposed to two opposite dangers. We are in danger either of becoming so deadened and apathetic in conscience as to be indifferent to and tolerant of evil; or else, if aroused, to be so hasty and proudly impetuous in action, as to fail both in duly estimating the circumstances and in waiting upon God. True faith is not impetuous nor unduly censorious. It weighs well and considers (for others as

well as for itself) the difficulties; and is only confident because it waits upon God. So was it with David when he dwelt in the cave of Adullam: so was it with Gideon when he tried the fleece, wet and dry: whilst Peter, on the other hand, neither considering his own powerlessness, nor what walking on the waters meant, was ready enough to meet the difficulty, and as ready to cry out in confusion and dismay. To walk steadily in the path of faith requires, that the conscience, and the affections, and the understanding, should be alike in healthful exercise: but if the conscience or the affections be active, and the understanding feeble or undirected by the word of God, there must be failure. Yet I say not these things to discourage. It is well neither to be behind our conscience, nor beyond our faith; only we have to seek that our conscience be not morbid, but guided by the light of revealed Truth; and that our faith should be reflective, and not be marked in its developments by hastiness or presumption. When Israel once were commanded to go onward they refused, and said they would go back into Egypt. Afterwards, when they were commanded not to go forward, they would go forward—and they disastrously failed. Again I repeat, that I say not these things to discourage. God forbid. Only let us be duly conscious of our weakness, and then cast ourselves on the graciousness and strength of Him "who resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble": "who

giveth liberally and upbraideth not." The love and graciousness of the character of God, as well as the grace of the everlasting covenant, is often a sweet and needed thought in the hour of weakness and depression.

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II.

From Verse 8 to 17 of Chapter II.

Nothing can be more marked than the contrast between the present condition of the Church of God, left for a season amidst the darkness and evil of earth, and the condition of its risen Head, in the rest and liberty and joy of His heavenly home. The dispensation in which we live is emphatically termed in Scripture, an "evil day." Not only does the whole creation groan, even as it began to groan when sin first entered, but the very blessings dispensed by God in the midst of the earth's ruin have been so used by man as to be turned against Him who gave them. The resources of the earth are great and various. It has its watered valleys and its fruitful plains; its gold and its silver; its brass and iron and marble—many things goodly and beautiful: and man's intellect and taste and skill have known how to avail themselves of these resources and to use them. But how have they been used? Have they fallen under the control of a hand meekly submissive to God and to Christ, or have they been grasped and wielded by the hand of unregeneracy and pride?

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It is in the history of the family of Cain that we first read of the builded city, and of "the father of such as have cattle, and of such as handle the harp and organ, and of the instructor of every artificer in brass and iron." Hence the origin of the civilization of man. Civilization if ordered and guided by the Spirit of Christ, how blessed! The earth needs it and groans for it, and in due season shall have it. But the present is the day of the civilization of unregenerate man. Its sun indeed has not yet attained the height of its meridian brightness. It will shine wondrously for a moment. But it will be but for a moment; for it is "to set at noon"—it is "to go down whilst it is yet midday"—to be quenched in the blackness of darkness for ever. The eighteenth of the Revelation gives us the maturity of that greatness which germinated in the family of Cain. Cain at the commencement—Nebuchadnezzar and Pilate in the centre—Babylon and Antichrist at the close, are names which sufficiently indicate what the character of "human progress" has been, and will be, till the end. Yet "human progress" is that in which even Christians glory, prophesying of it smooth things, blessing that which the Lord has not blessed.

But however great and excellent the natural gifts of God's creative goodness, there are other blessings far more precious than they. TRUTH has been made known by direct revelation from heaven. Israel first, and then Christendom, became the

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sphere of that light which came through Prophets and Apostles, and through the Son of God Himself. Israel first, and now Christendom, have received "the oracles of God."

But what was Israel, and what is Christendom? Has Truth found there its place of triumph and rest; or, its prison-house and grave? May it not be now said of Christendom what was once said of Israel, that the name of God is blasphemed among the heathen because of its iniquities? Governmental power also, without which order would have ceased to be, and evil would have run riot throughout the earth, is another gift that God has given. The Chaldæan and Persian, Greek and Roman Empires, have successively inherited a power which has made them during their respective periods, the centres of governmental influence in the earth. But their power has been systematically used against God, and the Ten Kingdoms into which the Roman World is soon to be divided, are they that will weave the last chaplet of human glory, and place it on the brow of Antichrist. The foundations, therefore, of all things are out of course. The very blessings given by God against darkness and against evil, have been so used by man as to increase darkness and to cherish evil. Well therefore may the present season of our militancy be termed an "evil day."

There are, from time to time, some in the Church of God whose hearts feel the truth of these things.

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They cannot rest, and they do not desire to rest, in things in which the Spirit of their Lord rests not. They know that there are many scenes which, though they shine like the plains of Sodom with Eden-like beauty (see Gen. xiii. 10), are yet plains of Sodom still. They know that the cities of human greatness are but so many places in which secular or ecclesiastical evil has enshrined itself and concentrated its energies against God. They know that the fruitfulness of the day of man is in Scripture symbolized by that "vine of the earth" whose clusters are to be cast into the "winepress of the wrath of God." They cannot, therefore, rest in these things: they shrink and retire from them like Noah's dove retired from those tossing and death-covered waters, where the raven that fed on death rested, but where *she* could not rest. Of such, the distant and lowly valley—the valley of "the mountains of separation," becomes a refuge. There they find their "valley of vision" (Isa. xxii. 1). There they can meditate on One who once knew the sorrows of earth, but now knows them no more for ever. Whatever clouds may brood over the valley, the light of the everlasting morning—the light of the day of the new creation, rests upon the height of "the mountains of Bether."* *There* there is severation from the circumstances of earth. *There* is that sphere of free and joyful liberty com-

* "Bether" means separation or severation.

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parable to the liberty of "a roe, or a young hart that comes leaping on the mountains, skipping upon the hills." What liberty more complete! What freedom more joyous! Man and his ways are unknown on the high tops of the mountains of severation. They rise above the clouds; they are far away from the darkness, and turmoil, and sorrow of earth.

In the passage before us we find her whose wanderings form the subject of this Song, seeking in the valley at the foot of these mountains of separation, the place of her rest. It was not an evil or unholy place of rest. It was not that kind of rest which on one occasion afterwards she was tempted to seek in the stately mansions of the City. But still it is very evident that the full energies of her faith and service were, to a certain extent, relaxed. The meditativeness of retirement is not always favourable to the strengthening and development of faith. The separate dwelling-place in the lowly valley is not *necessarily* the place of energy and strength. There is a time for all things—a time to act, and a time to rest; a time to strive, and a time to be still. Desire after a life of seclusion and repose may be the result of timorousness, or of a natural love of quiet, or it may spring from inertness. Discouragement too or disappointment may unnerve our strength, and may cause the hand to hang down, and the knee to be feeble; and, in that case, our rest may

become the prolonged rest of exhaustion rather than the rest of the soldier, sought only that it may re-invigorate for toil.

It is well for us that He, the place of whose rest is the far distant heights of the mountains of separation, forgets not her who sojourns in the valley. In the passage before us He is described as descending from those mountains and drawing near to her lowly dwelling-place. She recognises His voice, and her words show how well she appreciates the joyful liberty that pertains to Him in His bright and distant dwelling-place. "The voice of my beloved: behold He cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills. My beloved is like a roe or a young hart." The vigour of His step, and the exuberance of His joy, stand in marked contrast with her plaintive quietude. She hears His voice, and she understands it, for she is able to recite His words, "My beloved spake and said unto me, Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." Here was the invitation to her *faith*. Would she, by faith accompany Him to those new scenes of joys and glories, as yet unmanifested, where His home, and therefore

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virtually her home, is—for she and Himself are one. The land of which He speaks to her He calls "our land." "The voice of the turtle is heard in *our* land." Its rest, and joys, and melodies are thine. It is *my* land, but I have it not apart from thee. Come with me and view it. Come with me, and let us rejoice in it together.

But however sure the inheritance that grace has irrevocably given, it does not necessarily follow that we have present power of faith to appreciate and enjoy it. We are assured of many things which, nevertheless, we feebly realize. Long since, for example, to the anticipative ear of faith the millennial song has been sung. John, while yet the outcast of Patmos, was caught up into the heavens and heard it, and heard it for us. He heard it even whilst as yet all creation was groaning, as it still continues to groan in the bondage of corruption: he heard "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea and all that is in them, giving thanks"—as if the groan were past and the night of sorrow ended, and the morning without clouds come. How accordant with the words before us—"the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, &c." Yet do we realize these things? Does our faith "whilst toiling here below, catch up the joyful sound"? Do we carry the light of this joy into the dark

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scenes around us, where no present joy is, but rather lamentation, and mourning, and woe?

The Ephesians were not weak in faith, yet even for the Ephesians the Apostle prayed that "their inward eyes might be opened to discern what was the hope of God's calling, and what the riches of his inheritance in the saints." How feebly we recognise that God in raising and glorifying Christ, virtually, though not actually, raised and glorified us. Yet it was this that enabled the Apostle to say, "If any man be in Christ" (and all believers are in Christ) "there is to him a new creation:" * that is, he is himself new and all the circumstances of his condition (speaking of them as viewed in Christ) are new likewise. The glories of a new creation are his portion. "Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." And again, "as Christ is, so are we;" that is, in the judicial estimate of God, and therefore in the estimate of faith, we are already as Christ is, for He is our Head and Representative in glory. Well therefore may our Heavenly Bridegroom in speaking of the Land of His glory, speak of it as *our* land. And although it is true that the emblems of earth can but imperfectly express its joys, yet the coming of the spring and the singing of the birds, and the voice of the turtle, are similitudes condescendingly

* ὥστε εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ, καινὴ κτίσις· τὰ ἀρχαῖα παρῆλθεν, ἰδοὺ γέγονεν καινά.

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and graciously employed to shadow forth those joys unfading and eternal which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, but which God has revealed, through Christ, to be our eternal portion in the power of a new creation.

But to be told that these things are ours, and even to believe that they are ours, is not the same thing as having present capacity to enjoy them. There are many things which tend to impair the energies of faith, and cause timidity and trembling to usurp the place of holy confidence and strength. How many times was it reiterated in the ear of Joshua—"only be strong and of a good courage." How earnestly did St. Paul press upon Timothy, "God hath not given us the spirit of timidity (δειλίας) but of love, and of power, and of soundness of mind . . . my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Many things were bearing heavily and depressingly on the heart of Timothy. Dark clouds had settled in upon the close of the day of St. Paul's labour—that labour in which Timothy had been so long associated with him as with a father and a friend. St. Paul was in bonds. At Rome no one had stood with him; all forsook him. Even in Asia where he had laboured so faithfully and so long, all had turned away from him. The spirit of unfaithfulness and cowardice had seized even on the saints; and others who were not saints, but who were evil men and seducers, had crept into the churches, and their

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evil was to increase and wax worse and worse. Falsehood and iniquity were to progress. Truth was to be abandoned and betrayed. The Apostle was to die, and Timothy was to be left to meet the gathering storm. It was a dark prospect, and his heart quailed.

The heart when dejected, or timorous, or engrossed with the contemplation of surrounding dangers, is little able to rise above the circumstances. It has little power "to soar on faith's strong eagle pinion." It is more like the fluttered dove that flies from the rising storm, and seeks a hiding place "in the clefts of the rocks, or in the secret places of the stairs." Yet timidity or dejection are not necessarily accompanied by unfaithfulness. Timothy was not unfaithful; neither was she, whose history is the subject of the passage before us. She might unduly have hastened her escape from the stormy wind and tempest, and sought unwisely the quietude of the valley, but she was not unfaithful to her Lord. If unfaithful she would not so soon have recognised and welcomed His approach, nor would He have addressed her with words of cheering like these. Christ may and does love His own people, even when unfaithful. He loved the Laodiceans; but His words to them were not words of present comfort, but of rebuke. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." He cannot honour unfaithfulness, nor seek to comfort and gladden it

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by present views of the glory of His heavenly home.

Yet though she was not unfaithful, her faith was not vigorous. She heard His words of gracious invitation, but she replied not. He waited, but there was no response. He paused, and then again addressed her, but in an altered tone. He saw that she was as a dove that had hidden itself in secret places, and He asked her to come forth from her hiding-place that He might see her countenance and hear her voice, "for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." The development in His people of the activities of faith is a sight comely and precious in the eyes of Christ. Christ has still His interests in this earth: His interests are bound up with His Truth and with His people, and therefore when the words and habits of His saints show that they have a living interest in the things which interest Him, their ways have an attractiveness and beauty in His sight. He marks with joy every indication in any, of their hearts and energies being given to the things in which His soul delights. Sweet *then* is their voice and comely their countenance in His view. But the secret hiding-place which timidity or discouragement may seek, is not the place where energy of service is likely to flourish: on the contrary, it may there find its grave. Elijah, zealous though he was for the Lord God of Israel, could find no place for the display of his zeal in

the solitude of that desert where he had sought to bury himself, until arrested by the voice, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" The energies of faith cannot flourish in a self-chosen solitude, any more than plants buried in sunless gloom. She who was thus hiding herself in the clefts of the rock and in the secret places of the stairs, could not, whilst there abiding, give effect to her testimonies, or let her light shine before men. On other occasions we find her feeding her kids by the side of the shepherds' tents, or else caring for the vines, or walking amongst pleasant plants of fragrance which in her garden her hand had trained for her beloved. But she had left these spheres of her service and had withdrawn herself into a retirement whose quietude was likely to become the quietude of inertness and slumber.

When the Lord saw that she responded not to His appeal, He repeated it no more. He no longer spoke to her of the land far away—the land of His rest and glory; He no longer asked her to accompany Him there. It is in vain to expect high developments of grace when the energies of faith are enfeebled. The wise physician seeks not to extort strength out of weakness by forcing it into developments for which it has no power. He seeks rather by wise and kindly care to re-strengthen and to heal. Accordingly, in His new appeal to her who was as the dove hiding in secret places, the Lord no longer speaks of the bright glories of His

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heavenly home. He no longer asks her fellowship with Him in scenes and joys to which, for the present, her faith was unable to rise. Yet she was not, therefore, to be banished from all fellowship—all present companionship in His interests and joys. How then could she have been strengthened—how then could her vigour and power of future fellowship have been renewed? For by what is spiritual strength more effectually destroyed than by a want of participation in the occupations and interests of Christ? If she was at that moment unable to have fellowship with Him in His heavenly joys, yet there were occupations in earth in which she could be still united with Him—occupations in which she had once found joy, but in which apparently she had wearied, and hence, in part at least, her weakness. His words were gentle. They were not words of rebuke; scarcely words of admonition though admonition was to a certain extent implied "Take us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes." The recognition of unbroken fellowship is strongly marked in the word "our"—"*our* vines have tender grapes." He speaks of "our vines," just as He had before spoken of "our land." Yet His words seem to imply that she had not been so careful as she might have been over the vines: that she had not watched as vigilantly as she might have watched against the little foxes that marred their growth and fruitfulness. It is not

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only the greater and more open assaults of the enemy that are to be dreaded in the vineyards of Christ. There are, indeed, occasions when the wild boar of the wood may ravage, or the tempest uproot, or the blast wither. The storm of persecution may rage as when the Pentecostal saints were scattered: and the poisonous breath of heresy and corruption may wither, as at Corinth and Galatia. St. Paul was not without these greater conflicts with evil. At Corinth and at Galatia he found "travail," "anguish," and "many tears." But even when these greater dangers were not present, the Apostle well knew what it was to watch against lesser and more insidious workings of evil, very dangerous to growth and fruitfulness among the saints. There was much love and brotherly kindness at Thessalonica. Yet there it was that some were found ready to presume on that love; working not at all, but becoming busybodies. There had been a certain weakness exhibited in tolerating this evil, so that the Apostle had to say with apparent sternness, "If any man will not work, neither let him eat." How would the fruitfulness of the Thessalonians have been marred if these things had not been corrected. At Thessalonica, too, there had been much living appreciation of what the Apostle had taught them respecting the coming and kingdom of the Lord Jesus, but the effect of that truth on their souls and characters had become impaired by their

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cherishing false expectancies which never could have had any existence if they had exercised their understandings duly, and remembered the cautions which the Apostle had given. "Remember ye not," said he, "that whilst I was yet with you I told you these things. Let no man deceive you by any means." The Apostle never treated the slightest deflexion from truth as unimportant: he knew that falsehood is falsehood, and must (whatever the subject) work the effects of falsehood, and therefore he earnestly set himself to withstand incipient error. The saints at Philippi were marked by the vigour and stedfastness of their service. From the first day of their acquaintance with the Apostle they had fellowship with him in his service and suffering for the Truth. When even the Thessalonians forgot to minister to the Apostle's need, and suffered him, even whilst dwelling with them, and labouring for them, to know "necessity," the more vigilant eye of the Philippians marked and seized the opportunity. They sent to Thessalonica and ministered once and again to his necessities. Yet the insidiousness of evil needed to be watched against even at Philippi. There was danger lest even their earnestness in service should give rise to rivalry, and cause that things right in themselves should be done in strife or vain-glory; lest they should each look upon their own things only, and not also on the things of others. There was a danger lest Euodias and Syntyche (women who had

both aided the Apostle in his labours) should mar their service and fruitfulness by not being like-minded in the Lord.

The history of the Church, both individually and collectively, supplies many an example of the disastrous effects of these lesser agencies of evil. What watchful Christian knows not the power of little circumstances in stealing away opportunities of service, or hindering in the use of them? An angry or impatient look may mar an act of grace. An unkindly word may spoil an act of liberality. A deed of devotedness may be marred by something that indicates an undue estimate of self. A little circumstance may cause fruit of the fairest promise to be despoiled of its bloom, or to be marred by some disfiguring blemish. One dead fly may cause the most fragrant "ointment of the apothecary to stink."

When faith has become enfeebled and our practical energies impaired, one result ever is, that the soul seeks to re-establish to itself, and as it were, to reconvince itself of, truths which ought to be assumed as unquestioned and unquestionable. The soul of a believer is not prospering in spiritual health when it is seeking to reassure itself of truths which the grace of God has supplied to it as the established basis and starting point of its action. St. Paul, after he knew the grace of the gospel, did not spend his hours in proving to himself that he was Christ's, or that Christ was his; he assumed

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it as an established and unquestionable fact—it formed the basis of all his thoughts—it was the spring of all his actions.

In the case before us, she whose faith and whose energies had in a measure become enfeebled, and who was found hiding herself in secret places when first she was appealed to by her Lord, answered as we have seen, not at all. To His second appeal, however, she replied. Graciously adapting Himself to her weakness, He besought her to come forth that He might "see her countenance and hear her voice;" and the invitation was not in vain. She responded, and her voice was heard. But her first utterance showed what the meditation of her heart had been. She had evidently been pondering whether it was really true that her Beloved was hers and herself His. Without perhaps actually doubting it, she had occupied herself with re-assuring herself of a truth which in her happier hours—her hours of energy, whilst occupied in feeding the kids or caring for the vines, she had never thought of questioning. "My beloved is mine, and I am His." It was indeed a precious and most blessed truth. It was well that she should assure herself of it if she doubted it. But it was not the kind of response sought for by her Lord when He said to her, "come with me my love, my fair one, and let us view the goodliness of our Land together." In asking her to come and share His joys and glories, He did not ask that

she should debate within herself the question of the reality or the faithfulness of His love. Yet as I have already said, it was well that she should reassure herself of this if she doubted it. It was well too that she should remember that her Beloved was One that "feedeth among the lilies." Was she tempted to doubt whether her Beloved had any thing dear to Him in this earth? It was well then that she should remember that whatever joys He might have in His own proper dwelling-place on the bright and blessed heights of the mountains of separation, yet that He had also joys in earth; that there were still there, some in whom His heart rested—some of whom He could say, "my delight is in them." Though He had indeed turned away, as she too had turned away, from the violence, and strife, and pride, of man's city, which He loathed; though the earth as formed morally under the hand of man had no beauty in His sight, yet there were in earth other spheres—spheres retired and lowly, where flowers of true fragrance and hidden beauty grew. There He found His solace and His joy. The renewed conviction of this—the conviction that the earth was not altogether abandoned by Him, as if an utter void in which nothing lovely grew, was a great step towards a renewal of those joys of faith which she had often known in the activities of present service and testimony for her Lord. Nevertheless, to His invitation she responded *not*, save indeed to say, that her faith could not at

present rise into the appreciation of the joys and glories of His heavenly home. "Until the day break and the shadows flee away, turn my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart on the mountains of severation." Such were her words. They seem to say, "A time will come when this night of sorrow shall end, and then I will accompany thee to thy heavenly land, and have full fellowship with thee in all its joys. Till then let the light and liberty and joy of the mountains of separation be thine. It is my delight to think of thee as above the darkness of this night of sorrow, in the joy and brightness of thy distant home. And although I tarry for a season here, yet when the morning of the new day comes, I will say to thee no longer as now, 'Turn my beloved,' for I will go with thee then, and enter into all thy joys, and tread with thee the heights of the mountains of separation, and follow thee whithersoever thou goest."

These words do not indeed show so strong an apprehension as might have been shown, of the fulness of her present lot of blessing. They fall short of the words of the Apostle when he said, "old things have passed away, behold new things have become to be." Nevertheless, they are blessed words. They could only be used by a heart that had learned well to estimate the character of this present night of evil, and to contrast its darkness with the light and holiness of Heaven. They

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showed a full and joyful confidence in the love of her Lord, and a living anticipation of that coming hour when she too would know in no less perfectness than her beloved, the liberty and joy of the mountains of severation.

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III.

From Verse 7 to 16 of Chapter IV.

There are certain truths which may be always, under all circumstances, affirmed of the family of faith, because depending exclusively on that which Christ by His one finished sacrifice has accomplished for them. There is no one, for example, who has been once sprinkled with the blood of reconciliation (and every believer is sprinkled) of whom it may not be said, that "his iniquity is taken away, and his sin purged." Spotlessness pertaineth to him, not because he has no spots (they are as those of the leopard, countless), but because his spots are covered. Atoning blood hath covered them. Consequently, there is no one amongst Christ's people to whom it may not be said, "There is no spot in thee." In the judicial estimate of God this is as true *now* as it will be in that coming day when Christ shall present the Church unto Himself, "a glorious Church not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

But that which we may recognise as abstractedly true is not always livingly present to the apprehensions of the soul. It belongs to the Spirit of Christ

to give to the apprehensions of faith vividness and power; but that Spirit whereby God has sealed us as His own, may be grieved and hindered. The Corinthians were, what indeed all believers are, "spiritual," in that they were all quickened in Christ, and had within them "the new man," and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless the Apostle "could not speak unto them as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able." The encouragement and comfort which his heart and his lips were ready to minister to them were, in great measure, stayed. "All fulness" was given to them in Christ, but its present communication was hindered. The fountain was full, and the channels were prepared, but they who should have been the recipients were not ready. When the heart is full of other interests and rests satisfied with its portion, the voice of Christ's love, even if it comes, comes to a closed or preoccupied ear. It was not, however, so with her who is addressed in the verses before us. Her heart was not engrossed with wrong interests. She was standing holily separate, and (as the succeeding verses show) she had been occupied—earnestly and diligently occupied, in the things of her Lord. And to her, as thus standing, these words were addressed in living power of comfort. "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee. Come with me from

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Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon; look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards."

The mountains here mentioned are on the outskirts of the Land of Israel, constituting, virtually, its northern boundary. Thence we look down upon Immanuel's Land, and behold it left to its desolation. The power that regulates the earth is not found in *Zion now*. *Zion* is desolate, and other mountains are exalted—mountains in which the proud power of the Gentile dwells—"mountains of prey," as they are elsewhere called. "Thou art more glorious and excellent (*Zion* is addressed in the hour of her future glory) thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey. The stout-hearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands. At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep." (Ps. lxxvi. 4-6.) Such is the doom of the proud stout-hearted Gentile power that now dominates in the earth. Lebanon, Amana, and the like, are its representatives in the passage before us. They are the strong-hold of the earth's glory, but they are not the home of peace, or love, or grace, or truth. The Lamb—He who shall by and by rule on *Zion*, standeth not there. The roar of the lion and the cry of the leopard is heard there. There are lions' dens and mountains of leopards—sights and sounds from which the heart, that has learned to

rest in the love and grace of Christ, instinctively shrinks, and ought to shrink; for they are things strange and abhorrent to Christ's spirit. Nevertheless, it is needful for the servant of Christ to contemplate these things. The lesson respecting them should be learned. Unless we learn it, we shall fail in estimating aright the place of our present service, and we shall lack the light that can alone enable us to determine rightly the course of our testimony.

There are few things about which Christ has been more careful to instruct His people, than respecting the character of the path trodden by those who exercise supreme governmental power in the earth during the time of the abasement of Israel. In the estimate of the Spirit of Christ, Herod is "the fox"; Cæsar "the lion"; and the last great head of Gentile power "a beast covered with names of blasphemy." In the Scripture, all the four Empires that have been appointed successively to rule the earth are all fierce monsters, the last of which, when the time of its dominion shall have ceased, is to be "given to the burning flame." Yet, notwithstanding all the evidence afforded both by Scripture and by facts, there is probably no subject on which the minds, even of real Christians, have more wandered from truth, than in their estimate of Gentile governmental power. They have, not unfrequently, confided in it, hoped in it, made it often their counsellor and their guide, and sometimes rendered to it an homage that is due to the Lord alone. The era of

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Constantine, the time of the Reformation, and yet more modern times, afford sad evidence of the mistaken light in which the past and future course of governmental power has been viewed even by the true children of the Kingdom of God.*

We can easily understand, therefore, why she who is here addressed, is invited in the passage before us to come WITH Him (observe the word "with"; it indicates that she was to walk by the side of, and in companionship with, her Lord) and so to pass from one mountain top to another, and to view them in all the various aspects of their glorious but savage strength. Thence, too, she was to look forth upon the nations, and judge of their condition as the subjects of this fierce unsanctified power.

Never before had she been invited to view scenes like these. On other occasions, she had either been called away from earth to view the brightness and joys of her heavenly home, or else had been directed

* Let it, however, be observed that in speaking thus, we are speaking not of governmental power in itself, but of *its use*. All power is of God. It is one of His precious gifts to men; and they who hold it are to be officially reverenced, because they hold a power that God hath given. The archangel would not revile even Satan; how much more have we to beware of speaking evilly of those whom God has set to preserve order in the earth, and who are therefore ministers of God towards us for good. What would the world become if self-will and evil were allowed to run riot in it? Nothing can be more important than rule. Indeed it is so important, that righteousness and truth will never flourish in the earth until the sovereignty of the world has become "the sovereignty of our Lord and of His Christ." We may, therefore, honour and reverence governmental power, even while we recognise and weep over the course that it is treading.

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to the sheepfolds, or to the vineyards, as the peaceful separate place of her present service in the earth, far away from the turmoil and strife of man's city and the mountains of his power. But there should be a certain comprehensiveness in the apprehensions of faith. Not all the knowledge that the Ephesians may have had of heavenly fellowship with Christ—not all the experience gained by the Philippians or Thessalonians in their long course of loving and faithful service, would be sufficient to furnish the man of God completely, and to fit him thoroughly for the conflict, unless there be also an appreciation of the circumstances and characteristics of that "evil day" in which the Church finds the scene of her present conflict. He who has the heart of a warrior on the battle-field, and stands having his armour on, must be conversant with other sights and sounds than those which meet him either at the sheepfolds or in the scenes of his heavenly rest. Who more than John understood the blessedness of fellowship with his Lord in heavenly places? He, if any one, was a father in Christ, knowing "Him that was from the beginning"—having communion with Him as returned into that sphere of life and glory which He had as the eternal Son in the bosom of the Father before all worlds. John had well learned to appreciate the Church's heritage in its risen Head. He had learned too, to prove and to appreciate the place of the Church's retired and humble service in the earth. He had not forgotten

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the admonition, "Feed my sheep, feed my lambs." He had walked as a shepherd in the midst of the family of faith, exhorting them to abide in the truth and in the love of Christ. Yet it was John who was appointed in Patmos to behold other sights, and to become conversant with far different scenes. Glory was indeed revealed to him there—bright heavenly glory; but it was glory brought into contrast and antagonism with the darkness and corruption of earth. He was taught to behold the earth as filled with, and held down beneath, the power of evil ripening for judgment. He was caused to walk, as it were, from mountain to mountain of Gentile power,—to behold their evil greatness, to view the course and end of their blasphemies, and to record their doom. He left for a season "the bleating of the sheepfolds" to hear the roar of the lion and leopard amidst the mountains and dens of their savage greatness, where that greatness is, for the present, permitted to strengthen and establish itself, and to mar and "destroy" (Rev. xi. 18) the earth.

There are many worshippers of human progress, as it is called, who look to these seats of Gentile power, as if they were the appointed rectifiers of the earth. Their hope is in these lions' dens and mountains of leopards, as if they were the earth's appointed deliverers. They think not of the condition of Immanuel's Land; appreciating *not* the nature and cause of its present woe; and regarding *not* its destined glory in "the age to come." They

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have no knowledge of the time when the true Solomon, the Prince of Peace, shall reign, and "the mountains" (*i.e.* the greater seats of authority in the earth) and "the little hills" (the lesser seats of authority) "shall all bring peace to the peoples, by means of righteousness." They have never contrasted that coming period with the present hour of the lordship of unregenerate man. They know nothing of that storm of judgment and fiery indignation that is to introduce the long-promised morning of blessing. Necessarily, they call evil good; put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; say Peace, when there is no peace; and glory in the very things which are to bring down the righteous inflictions of Divine vengeance. Let the people of Christ beware of these apostles of human progress. Let them hear the invitation of their Lord, and view as by His side, these mountains of Gentile glory, and look forth from them on the troubled world over which they dominate; and they will be taught a holy fear. They will shrink from the scene around them, and their hope will be alone in the arm of Him who has promised in His own appointed time to work deliverance in the earth, by abasing these "mountains of prey," and establishing instead, the *Zion* of God —the mountain of holiness and Truth.

It is a vain hope to imagine that Truth will spread and attain its destined supremacy, whilst the high places of authority amongst men remain unsubject to its power. Until the sovereignty of the

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world shall have become "the sovereignty of our Lord and of His Christ," it is impossible that righteousness should prosper. Next to God's revealed Truth, there is nothing in the earth that more nearly concerns the welfare and happiness of man, than the administration of governmental power; and until that power is taken from those to whom it is, at present, delegated, and given to Him who is to be brought before the Ancient of days (see Dan. vii.) that He may be invested with it, the dens of lions and mountains of leopards will not be either subverted, or changed as to their character. Satan will succeed in controlling the diadems of earth, and iniquity will continue to flourish till then.

It is a happy thing when the heart of a believer is ready and willing to receive this lesson respecting the present condition of human things. If we have drunk of the wine of earth and found solace in the world's joys, we shall be little prepared to walk amidst the mountains of its glory and judge truthfully. We shall be dazzled by their brightness, covet their influence, and bow down before their power. The Lord asks not such to come with Him to view these mountains of strength. She who in the passage before us is summoned to His side, had not been indulging herself in evil joys, or neglecting the service of her Lord. On the contrary, she had been keeping herself in holy separation. Nor had the monotony of her retirement, and the seclusion of her almost solitary path, undermined her vigour.

The allusion in the verses that follow, to the garden, in which she had laboured, and its pleasant plants of fragrance, sufficiently indicate the character of her service, and the earnestness of her toil. Wisdom had been given her to find the one green spot —the one place of true joy in the world's wide wilderness, where she found happiness for herself in doing those things which she knew to be pleasing in the sight of Him in whose faithful love she rested. Consequently, her heart was not dull nor her ear heavy, when she was suddenly called from these scenes of quietude and peace, to behold lions' dens and mountains of leopards. The holy sensitiveness found in her, fitted her the more to receive the appointed lesson—a lesson like the book which John in vision was commanded to eat—sweet in the mouth, but when incorporated into the apprehensions of the soul—bitter.

There is no doubt a peculiar sorrow connected with the apprehension of what the world governmentally and socially is. Unless counteracted, it may weigh on the heart so heavily as to break the spring of its energies, and cause despondency and languor. It was an apprehension of the prevalence and strength of evil—an apprehension most profitable *when duly qualified by other truth*—that caused Jeremiah to cry, "Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed. . . . Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days

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should be consumed with shame?" (Jer. xx. 15, 18.) In Habakkuk too we find a scarcely less bitter cry. "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save! Why dost thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention. Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth; for the wicked doth compass about the righteous: therefore wrong judgment proceedeth." (Hab. i. 2-4.) The more the heart recognises the preciousness of Truth, the more must it weep over the triumph of falsehood and guile. And when we consider the gigantic and still increasing strength of the evil that now dominates in the earth, and trace the extent of its mighty influence, and view, as detailed in the word of God, its future course, and compare this present hour of the Truth's weakness with that of the world's abounding and increasing strength, we cannot wonder that the heart should be ready to question whether it be possible that any thing truly pleasing to Christ—any thing in which His heart can really rejoice, should any where be found amidst the scene of well-nigh universal darkness.

Wine, it is said, is for them who are of heavy heart. Whatever cause there may be for depression, there is always ability and willingness in the Lord to comfort His people with *present* comfort if only there be separateness and a leaning of heart upon

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Him. Accordingly, she who is addressed in the passage before us, was speedily and abundantly comforted. Suddenly withdrawn from the sphere of her peaceful service to behold the triumphant and prospering reign of evil, it is no wonder that her heart should have sunk. As she contrasted the gigantic advance of evil with the hindered and restricted progress of Truth, and thought of her own narrow sphere of service, so hidden and so despised as scarcely to elicit the world's censure; and when she remembered too her own feebleness, and the imperfectness of her apprehensions and appreciations both of good and evil, and the want of vigour and comprehensiveness in her faith—when she reflected on these and other like things, it was natural that her heart should faint, and that she should question whether there was anything in her or around her that could really receive the approval and commendation of her Lord. Was there anything in her feelings, or demeanour, or character, or service, that was really acceptable in His sight? The answer was not long delayed. She was declared to be the subject not only of His approval, but of His joy and complacent delight. His delight was in her. The very glance of her eye was precious in His sight. The eye soon expresses the feelings of the soul. If the eye shrinks from those things from which the Spirit of Christ shrinks, and beholds loveliness in the things in which His heart delights; if it looks with holy trembling on the iniquity of

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earth, and turns confidingly and humbly to Him; if, as the eye of a servant towards the hand of his master, it wait upon the Lord alone, the glance of such an eye would in the estimate of Christ be blessed. And if there are the adornments of a meek and quiet spirit, and if there be lips of knowledge which are as "a precious jewel, more precious than a multitude of rubies," then there are things that are necklaces of beauty—chains of grace around the neck. So it was with her. In her retirement, where, in her garden, she had been nurturing plants of heavenly fragrance, she had learned many a lesson, and the results were manifest. Her look, her adornments, the proved truth and faithfulness of her love was precious in the sight of her heavenly Lord. "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!" The wine and spices of earth are but shadows appointed to indicate the gratefulness and acceptableness before Christ of the character of those, who (in private, it may be, and almost hidden spheres) seek, like Philemon, or Gaius, or Dorcas, to show out of a good conversation their works with meekness of wisdom. No official or recognised ministerial place is necessary to fruitfulness in the Church of God. Pride may court such a place and rush unbidden into it, and

then true spiritual healthfulness will wane and depart. The mouth may be as a fountain "sending forth sweet waters" in a sphere as little prominent as that which was filled by "Philologus, and Julia, and Nereus." We know not who they were. But their names, as well as those of many others in like unobtrusive spheres, are by the Apostle recorded with honour—honour that will remain in the day of Christ.

There are, perhaps, few things which even an instructed believer more feebly recognises than the importance and potency of "*the tongue*," whether in serving evil or good. Naturally, it is set on fire of hell; it uses deceit; it is full of cursing and bitterness; it is instinct with the venom of asps; it walks proudly through the earth serving the lusts of those who say, "Our lips are our own, who is lord over us?" Yet how often is the eloquence of the unregenerate tongue delighted in, even by believers! How often are words of philanthropic kindness and amiability, as they drop from the lips of those who know not and prize not the Gospel of the grace of God, allowed to hide the certain truth, that the lips of such must be (whatever they may seem) an open sepulchre, breathing forth the taint of corruption and death, because nothing but death is there. There is one Christ; one Spirit; "one name given amongst men whereby we must be saved"; one Book sent into the world by God as the infallible record of Truth; and if men depart therefrom,

however much they may clothe their aberrations in garments of light, yet there is no light in them. They serve Satan, and not God. Yet nothing, perhaps, as I have already said, is more feebly appreciated than the influence of the tongue in the service of evil, except indeed it be, the value attached by the Lord to its service in the cause of good. We find it difficult to recognise that any among Christ's people here, can be capable of being addressed by Him in such words as these: "Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue." What a contrast with the venom of asps! Yet so it is when the lips keep knowledge; when they are established in the *grace* of the sanctuary where redemption hath brought in everlasting peace; when they speak (it may be in a private and hidden sphere) words of truth and soberness drawn from the Scriptures of Truth; when they speak humbly in confession, or supplication, or thanksgiving unto God; or minister comfort to them to whom comfort is due; or speak to the world of righteousness and coming judgment and present grace as declared in the blood of the Lamb: in all such cases, that which distils from such lips is as the dew of heaven, and whether rejected or received, it has before God a preciousness unspeakable and eternal, that no circumstances can alter—a preciousness that may be despised or forgotten on earth, but which is remembered in the heavens.

Yet believers are not unfrequently ready to say,

"If it be so, why am I thus?" If the service of Christ's people be thus pleasing and acceptable in His sight, why is their service not prospered? Why is the excellency and beauty of Truth hidden? Why do not our testimonies which, because of the truth that is in them, we know to be precious, attract, not indeed to ourselves (that we desire not) but to Him? Why are they so rejected and despised? Is it not because they have so failed in our hands through our weakness, that the Lord is displeased with us and will not prosper them? There may be, and no doubt often are, occasions when it is so. The remnant of Israel in the days of Haggai when they ceased to care for the Temple of the Lord and thought only of their own houses, were not blessed, but smitten. (See Haggai i.) But there are also occasions when it is otherwise. In the case before us there had been rightly directed energy,—holy and acceptable service, yet she who rendered it is described as "a garden inclosed; a spring shut up; a fountain sealed." A garden inclosed may be well protected and preserved; its walls may be walls of strength and security; but an inclosed garden is not one whose beauties are made manifest: they are recognised and known only by its possessor. They are beauties that dwell, virtually, in a *secret* place. An inclosed garden is not the emblem of that which enlarges its limits, and advances upon the rude waste around, and spreads verdure and beauty over surrounding desolation.

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Nor is a *shut up* spring, a *sealed* fountain, an emblem of diffusion. Waters "shut up" may be most precious—the fact of their being sealed shows that they are precious in the sight of their possessor. They may exist too in exhaustless plenitude, ready to flow forth like the cool streams from the snows of Lebanon on scorched and burning plains below. Yet such waters may be despised; no channels may be made ready to welcome and direct their flow; The arid waste may continue to wither, and that which is ready to be as "a fountain of gardens," causing fragrance and beauty to flourish and abound, remains shut up—its vivifying power existing seemingly in vain.

Facts and the Scripture abundantly testify that such is the Church's present relation to the moral waste around. Even in the days of its early strength, before weakness and decrepitude overtook its testimonies, its beauties were unrecognised by any save its heavenly Lord, or those whom He called His friends. None others cared to look upon the holy enclosure; or if they entered and looked on it, it was only to despise and to withdraw. The garden cultivated by the hand of Truth, blooms with plants of heavenly fragrance. "Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices" are there—all plants of heavenly fragrance, but not delighted in by the Egyptian heart that dwells by the flesh-pots, and hungers after its garlic,

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leeks, and onions—feeding nature's strength with nature's food.

But darkness shall not always reign. "The fountain of gardens" shall not always be as a fountain shut up and sealed. An hour is coming when its streams shall flow forth in living power, unchecked and prospered in their course. "Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit." "Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven." In the meanwhile, "The Church of the first-born ones" now militant in the midst of suffering and sorrow, has to wait in patience of hope. It has to remember that however restricted its sphere, it may be itself as a garden yielding plants of fragrance, precious in the sight of its Lord. And even if the Church unitedly ceased to be this, individual Christians may in their several spheres be as pleasant plants of fragrance. If only one solitary Christian were left in the world and he walked in grace, there would still be that in the earth which Christ would discern and recognise as a plant of heavenly fragrance.

There was no one of Christ's servants, perhaps, who had so strong an apprehension as the Apostle Paul, of the value and preciousness of the Church as a garden in the estimate of its heavenly Lord. Therefore he laboured to make it a garden abounding in plants of fragrance. The full energies of his heart were given to it. "Now," said he, "I live if ye stand fast in the Lord." And his efforts were not

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in vain. He could speak of the Churches amongst whom he laboured and whom he nurtured (being gentle among them, even as a nurse cherisheth her children) he could speak of them as "epistles of Christ, known and read of all men." They livingly expressed the mind of Christ. Their doctrines and their manners were in conformity with the truth as revealed in God's holy word. The fragrance of Truth was found in the garden of the Lord. The Apostle recognised it, and he knew that the grace of his Lord would recognise it. He could, as it were, hear the voice of his Master saying, "Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices." The Apostle, and many others far weaker and more unworthy than the Apostle, regarded and were entitled to regard, words such as these as expressive of the Divine estimate of their humble and despised labour. Such was the place occupied by her who is addressed in the passage before us. She was thus comforted—she was thus encouraged. The plants about which she had laboured had their fragrance recognised by Him for whom she had trained them. He came to view them, and He called both on the north wind and the south wind to blow upon *His* garden—that garden whose plants He had before pronounced to be *hers*—in order that the spices thereof might flow out. "Awake, O

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north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."

The north and south winds are evidently symbolic of two diverse and contrasted influences, to both of which the garden of the Lord is, from time to time, subjected here. The chill northern blast may so blow as to wither and destroy; or it may be so moderated as to revive and strengthen. It can invigorate by its cold, and develop qualities which more gentle influences fail to elicit. In the case before us it was called upon to awake, not that it might destroy, but that it might refresh and bring forth into development. "Endurance" is a grace that needs for its development the presence of the northern wind. Courage and soldiership can have little place where quietness and peace reign. "Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." On the other hand, there are graces that peculiarly flourish under the gentle influences of the south. Job felt it so, when, smitten by the northern blast, he looked back upon the time when other influences, gentle and peaceful, prevailed around him, and when in his prosperity he forgot not the Lord, but served Him with ready heart, and out of his abundance spread blessing over others, making the widow's heart sing for joy. "Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me: when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness: . . . When the ear heard me, then it blessed

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me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was as a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not, I searched out. And I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth. Then I said, I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply my days as the sand. My root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch. My glory was fresh in me, and my bow was renewed in my hand. Unto me men gave ear, and waited, and kept silence at my counsel. After my words they spake not again; and my speech dropped upon them. And they waited for me as for rain; and they opened their mouth wide as for the latter rain. If I laughed on them, they believed it not; and the light of my countenance they cast not down. I chose out their way, and sat chief, and dwelt as a king in the army, as one that comforteth the mourners. But now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock." Job greatly prospered—spiritually prospered, under the gentle influences of the south; but under the withering of the northern blast he quailed and spoke

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unadvisedly with his lips, justifying himself rather than God. Yet to retain spiritual healthfulness as Job had done under the full sunshine of prosperity, argues no little grace. Stedfastness and faithfulness to God, and to His Truth, are perhaps never more proved than then. Asa, Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah, stood firm in days of adversity: but when prosperity came, they failed—Asa, grievously. The garment which we may prize in the hour that the north wind blows, we may cast from us in the day of the breathing of the gentle south; and the garment so spurned may perhaps prove to be essentially a characteristic part of our pilgrim attire. Amongst all the servants of Christ there has been, probably, no one who has under *all* circumstances retained his stedfastness so fully as the Apostle Paul. "I know," he said, "both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I am strong as to all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." He found in his very employments an instrumental means of strength. He laboured not for himself; nor simply for the interests of men as men; nor for the Church apart from Truth (for the Church may have selfish interests of its own) but he laboured for the Church that it might be preserved, and established, and enlarged in the knowledge of the revealed Truth of God. And what was the result? That in the midst of the fierce Gentile world, in

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close contiguity to the mountains of their godless strength, there was found many a spot which was as a garden inclosed, full of plants of heavenly fragrance—plants which he had watched over and cherished as knowing that they were precious in the sight of his Lord. He had well learned to estimate the mountains of Gentile power: he recognised them as dens of lions and leopards; he knew the consequences of the abandonment and desolation of Immanuel's Land; but this knowledge, though it caused him anguish and many tears, yet weakened not his strength. He turned with the more thankfulness to his hidden and despised service in the garden of his Lord, finding there the sphere of his present joy. "*At present*," said he to the Colossians, "I rejoice in my sufferings for you." He did indeed anticipate other joys in the future, but his present joy was in suffering for Christ's people whilst labouring to present each one ripe in faith and of mature growth in Him. All the plants over which he watched were not of the same maturity; all had not the same vigour. Neither were any perfect. The Thessalonians had in a measure quailed under the northern blast: they were almost ready to faint under prolonged and bitter suffering. The Corinthians had become weary of the Nazareth garb of Truth, and were desiring to reign as kings before the time. Perfectness, therefore, was not found in God's people, either corporately or individually, even when an apostle watched over them. Never-

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theless, there was fragrance in their ways—gifts and graces which God's own Spirit had given; and in this fragrance, as it was from time to time developed, the Apostle knew that his Lord rejoiced. He could speak of a gift given by the Philippians for Christ's sake, as being "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God."

Yet although I have thus referred to the Apostle and his labours in illustration of the passage before us, we must beware of imagining that we can have no garden—that we can train no plants of pleasant fragrance unless we have an apostle's sphere of service. The apostles in their own peculiar office had no successors: and although God has in faithful mercy according to His promise (see Eph. iv.) continued to supply evangelists, pastors, teachers, and the like, yet even at the time of the Church's early history, when ministers of the Word were in greatest abundance given, they were even then, comparatively few. Shepherds are always few in comparison with the flocks they feed. It is not therefore necessary to "minister in the word and doctrine," or to occupy any ostensible or official place in the Church of God in order to have around us a garden that may be cultivated and become fragrant and fruitful in the sight of the Lord. Dorcas, and Epaphroditus, and Gaius, were individuals whose sphere of service was *comparatively* unnoticed and unknown. Yet, seeing that they loved and abided in the Truth which the apostles taught, they each of them found

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in the discipline of their own hearts, and in the circumstances immediately contiguous to themselves, opportunities for cherishing and carrying out into development habits of thought and action which surrounded them with fruitfulness and fragrance. The devotedness of Dorças (for it was a devotedness guided by God's revealed Truth) would, whatever the Church's collective condition, have made her and the sphere around her, a garden of pleasant plants into which she could invite her Lord, and into which He would come and gather His myrrh and His spices. Even as the field of the suburbs of the Levites' cities could not be alienated, so the people of Christ shall never be deprived of the opportunity of sowing, and nurturing, and training, that which is well-pleasing in the sight of God, who despiseth not the day of small things. The sphere may be circumscribed and lowly, yet it may be laboured in with zealous and energetic heart, and it is the heart that the Lord regardeth.

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IV.

From Chapter V. 2, to Chapter VI. 3.

It has been already observed that the place assigned to her, whose varying experiences are the subject of this Song, was not the City. *There*, man had collocated *his* strength, and stamped the impress of his own name: *that*, therefore, was not the place designed for her, whose distinctive blessing was companionship with her rejected Lord. Like Him she was called "to go without the gate, bearing His reproach." She was to find the place of her rest and her occupation, far away from man's City; in the vineyards or at the sheep-folds; or in some "garden enclosed," where plants of heavenly fragrance could be trained by her for her Lord.

In the previous chapter, we find her in one of her highest positions of honour and blessing. We see her encompassed by plants of pleasant fragrance that had sprung up under the culture of her hand—herself rejoicing in the presence of her Lord, and acknowledged by Him as one that was ministering to His joy. She had asked Him to come into His garden, and He had come and tasted of its honey-

comb, and spices, and pleasant fruits. He had commended her, and they had rejoiced together.

But now, how changed the scene! She had forsaken the sheep-fold, and the vineyard, and the garden; she was no longer a sojourner "without the gate"; she had wandered into the City, and found her way into one of its palaces; she had encompassed herself with its delicacies (for she speaks of her fingers dropping with sweet smelling myrrh) and there she had lain down to rest. Her pilgrim-garb was laid aside. She was no longer the despised shepherdess, or the keeper of the vineyards, but rather a princess, treading delicately kings' courts. She no longer said, as once she had done, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?" Her companionship with her Lord had ceased; and she sought not to renew it. He still remained unsheltered—"His head filled with dew, and his locks with the drops of the night"; whilst she was resting, or seeking to rest, in the midst of luxuries and refinements which could never have been hers unless she had abandoned the true place of her service and had ceased to be a sojourner "without the gate."

"I sleep, but my heart waketh." Such was her apology—such the plea by which she would fain have hidden from herself, as well as excused to

others, the truth of her condition. But why this difference between her outward circumstances and her inward feelings? Was it needful? Was it right? And could such discrepancy continue? Would the heart long remain wakeful, if the eye and the ear ceased to watch, and the hand to act? And even if the heart could so watch, what use would there be in such vigilance, if no outward development followed? Who would credit her tale respecting her heart's wakefulness, if all surrounding circumstances contradicted her saying, and proved that her activity had wholly given place to slumber? Yet, false as is the plea, it is one by which believers have, not unfrequently, deceived themselves; until their slumber has become so deep as to preclude the possibility of arousing them even to a sense of the delusion.

She, however, whose history we are here considering, was not to be allowed to sink into such depth of slumber. Her course was to be arrested. She was speedily to be summoned from her resting place, and brought back to the side of her Lord; for her heart had not yet so lapsed as to be altogether deaf to His voice, or indifferent to its call. Accordingly, when He drew nigh and knocked at the closed door—(the door which herself had closed against Him) as soon as she heard His call, as the call of one who was seeking for Himself shelter from the cold and darkness, and dew of night, she instantly recognised His well-known

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voice—"It is the voice," said she, "of my beloved that knocketh." Yet she was slow, and even reluctant, to unlock the closed door. "I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?" Such were the words with which, at first, she responded to His call. Was it that she was really unwilling to re-assume, for a brief moment, the garment she had put off? Did she really fear that her feet, which she had washed, would be defiled by crossing, for a moment, the chamber of her luxury? Or, did her heart tell her that if her Lord entered that chamber, He would refuse to share with her the shelter she had chosen and would surely summon her from it: and that thus, drawn from her resting place, she too would have to say, that her "head also was filled with dew, and her locks with the drops of the night?" Conscience is quick, under certain circumstances, in anticipating results; though its anticipations are not unfrequently wrong; because though discerning, perhaps, the path of duty and its difficulties, it fails with equal clearness to apprehend the grace and lovingkindness which sustains in that path, and removes or overcomes its difficulties.

Doubtless, she anticipated that she would be called away from her rest, and hence her reluctance. Yet, her folly was not permitted to turn aside the persistency of His grace. He had before knocked: He now sought to *open* the closed door. Her heart was touched; and she arose to unlock it—her

"hands dropping with myrrh, and her fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock." Here was the evidence of the luxuriousness of her rest. It was a condition very unlike that of the shepherdess whom the sun had looked upon and blackened; or that of the outcast in the vineyards, despised and spurned by her own mother's children. She opened the door, however; but it was too late. He was gone. "I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone; my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer." Indeed, He had never designed to enter that chamber, nor to rest where she rested. He had only come there to arouse her. If she desired to find Him, she must thread her way back through the streets of that City into which she never ought to have wandered. She must again go without the gate, and seek Him *there*.

And she *did* seek Him; for her heart was really true to her Lord. She returned not to her forbidden rest; but forsaking that goodly chamber, she went forth even at that midnight hour into the dark City, helpless and alone. No voice of love greeted her; no kindly hand sustained, no friendly voice directed her. She was to be chastened, and to know many sorrows ere she again found herself by the side of Him from whom she had wandered. "The watchmen that went about the city found me; they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers

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of the walls took away my veil from me." Such is her own narrative of her sorrows. The watchmen of man's City, and the keepers of its walls, can have no sympathy with any one who is unattracted by that City's glories, and refuses to labour for its interests—having an ear deaf to its melodies, an eye closed to its beauties. "Who is blind but my servant? Or deaf as my messenger that I sent? Who is blind as he that is perfect, and blind as the Lord's servant? Seeing many things, but thou observest not: opening the ears, but he heareth not." Such was the character of the One faithful and true Witness; and such, in measure, is the character of all who remember His example, and follow His steps; for they know that from the days of Cain and of Nimrod to the present hour, unregenerate man under Satan has been lord of the earth, and has stamped upon it the impress of his evil hand. They know too that in this there will be no change, except indeed for advance in rebellion, until the Lord shall be revealed in the brightness of His destroying glory. "Human progress," therefore, is to them, only another name for the advance of unregeneracy to its doom. "Antichrist," "Babylon," "Armageddon," "the wine-press of the wrath of God," "the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone," such are the names that indicate to the eye of faith the end and the goal of all present human progress. The more, therefore, the City of man strengthens itself—the more it illumines itself

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with brightness, the more the instructed heart trembles; for it knows what "will be in the end thereof." What place then more fearful than that held by those who are the watchmen of man's City —the strengtheners of its greatness—the defenders of its walls.

If that place had been held only by the Nimrods, and Cæsars, and Caiaphases of earth, and their servants; if the world's religiousness had always worn its Pagan or its Jewish garb, and had never assumed the profession of the name of Jesus; if none of Christ's servants had been seduced into the belief that the City of man is being gradually transformed into the City of God, the danger would not be what it at present is. But nominal Christianity has undertaken to sanctify the world's energies. It has encouraged those who give themselves, body and soul, to the advancement and glorification of man's City, and has told them that in so doing they glorify God. It has put the name of Christ upon Christ's enemies; and has striven to identify before the thoughts of men, the City of God and the City of man. And it has wonderfully succeeded. Few recognise that the relation held by the Lord Jesus and His servants the apostles, towards Caiaphas and Cæsar, and all that morally characterised Jerusalem or Rome, is still the relation in which Truth and its servants stand toward every system, secular or religious, that is formed by the hand, or controlled by the will of unregenerate man. Doubtless,

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the acknowledgment of this narrows greatly the path of Christ's servants; but is not the way narrow that leadeth unto life? Is the exhortation to "go without the camp, bearing His reproach," limited to any especial time or place? Is it not a commandment addressed to all who own the sanctifying blood of Jesus? "Jesus that He might sanctify the people by His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Can any words more plainly mark the everlasting difference between the City of God and the City of man? And as the hour of Antichrist draws nigh, this difference becomes, not indeed more real, but more marked, every day.

We cannot wonder that they whose view is bounded by the horizon of earth should greatly glory in man's present progress. The leaders of the world's energies have not laboured in vain. The City of man grows and waxes stronger and stronger every day: and even professed servants of Christ consent to guard it and to become the watchmen of its walls. We can well conceive how, like Nebuchadnezzar of old, they walk about upon its battlements, and look forth upon its greatness and say, "Is not this the City which our hands have formed, and which our skill and wisdom preserve?" Religiously and secularly they glory in it; and woe to the pilgrim stranger that comes across their path

and tells them that her Lord whom she worships, is not only distant from, but AGAINST *them* and *it*. We might expect that their wrath would wax hot against her—that they would smite and wound her, for what more hateful in their sight than such thoughts, and ways, and testimonies as hers? But why did she draw nigh them? Did she indeed expect to find in them sympathy, or to obtain from them direction? Did she imagine that *they* could tell her where to find her Lord; or that *they* would be willing to seek Him with her? She may, perhaps, have thought so; for when the people of God with perplexed heart and uneasy conscience find themselves treading a wrong path, surrounded too by the results of their disobedience, it is not often that they view the circumstances around them with calm sobriety of mind. Impulse and excitement, for the most part, rule their steps; and they earn by their own foolishness, chastisement and sorrow. So was it with her. If, commissioned by her Lord, and coming as from His side, she had met these watchmen and keepers of the City she might have confronted them and triumphed. At any rate, she would have been sustained by His strength. But it was far otherwise now. She appeared before them not only as an alien (that she must ever have been) but as an alien, weak, sorrowful, deserted,—and needing, perhaps claiming, help. Were *they* to be the helpers of that which they abominated? They helped her not, but they smote her.

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In human life, however, they who have power and energy to *act upon* others, are far fewer than those who *are acted on*. Men, for the most part, are the ready subjects of others' influence. Multitudes dwell in man's City who are neither its "watchmen," nor "the keepers of its walls," but its "daughters." Trained under its influences, and unresistingly imbibing from their earliest years its principles, they readily receive from the institutions of society around them an abiding impress. Society prepares the mould, and their characters, like plastic clay, are formed therein. Having little ability, and less desire, to test the principles and practices that prevail around them, they find it far more easy to favour what others favour, than to incur the labour and painfulness of examination. Prosperity, success, numerical increase, popular approbation, and the like, are their tests; and anything that answers thereunto is readily accepted by them as good and true. "Securus judicat orbis terrarum." The universal verdict of society is in their judgment a sufficient warrant for Truth. How can that be wrong which the whole world judges to be right? They know that it is more easy to float with the current than to struggle against it: more pleasant to consort with that which is honoured and dignified, than with that which is outcast and despised. To look too searchingly into any thing is in their estimate the part of folly, rather than of wisdom. They know that, as the foot moves most pleasantly when it

lightly skims over the ground's surface, so does the heart know least of sorrow when it thinks and feels *superficially*. Carelessly, therefore, they bow down before anything that educationally they have learned to reverence. When not swayed by habit, they are guided by expediency. Where the multitude leads, they follow. Such is the character of the "daughters of Jerusalem." They are the children of the City of man. It is their parent and their home. They love it—cleave to it—rejoice in it. Nothing is more abhorrent to their hearts than the thought of going without the gate, bearing reproach. If not sensitive to the appeals of Truth, they are very sensitive to ignominy, and dread the scorn of men even more than they covet their approbation. Truth, or such portions of it as admit of being established in a place of dignity and honour they are not unwilling to accept: but *the reproach* of Truth they fear. Is not this the condition of myriads in Christendom now? Floating carelessly on the surface of the stream, they are the sport of every casual influence, and are thus being prepared as a ready prey for that coming hour of delusion, before whose potency none but those who have really the spirit of Christ will stand. In proportion as the bonds which have hitherto bound human society together are dissolved, and as men become more "like unto fishes of the sea that have no ruler over them," so will they become a more ready prey to the influence of those who will shape the world's

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moral course at its closing hour, and be swept into that mighty drag-net which will enclose unto perdition.

Yet, even among the daughters of "man's City," grace can, and does, find a remnant. Not unfrequently before, had this pilgrim stranger whom the sun had looked on and blackened, who could speak of the roes and hinds of the field, or of vineyards, or sheep-folds, or of lilies, but knew not the manners of the City, being a stranger to its palaces and its priestly courts—not unfrequently before had this wanderer found herself in the presence of the daughters of Jerusalem. Yet never before had she stood before them as now, in reproach and dishonour, smitten and wounded, and that by the guardians of their City—at a time too when she could no longer say that she was with her Lord, or closely following His footsteps. On the contrary, she had to confess that she had wandered from and lost Him; and she even appealed in the excitement of her harassed heart to *them*, as if *they* could tell her where to find Him whom her soul loved—a vain and foolish appeal, for how could *they* direct her who knew nothing of her Lord or of His ways. Yet such often is the manner of the servants of Christ when they have wandered from the practical place into which He seeks to separate His people. Impulsiveness and excitement give birth to great activities; but there is a want of reflectiveness—a want of sobriety of mind. There is an absence of the calm

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guidance of Truth; and if this condition of soul continues, if Christ do not quickly bring back to the place where He feeds His separated flock with His own pure Truth, the results are unspeakably sorrowful. What more disastrous than unguided or misguided energy! It is as when soldiers, abandoning their banners and their lawful leaders, rush wildly into the battle-field: or as when a torrent having no channels prepared for its course, spreads desolation where its waters rightly guided would have brought fertility and fruitfulness.

It was, however, otherwise with her whose history we are here considering. Her wandering was not to be prolonged. Her Lord had come and effectually roused her from her evil slumber, and her heart was incapable of rest until she again found herself practically by His side. If she had been content with anything short of this, she would probably have linked herself in some way to the daughters of Jerusalem, and abjectly submitted to their control, and made the keepers of their walls her masters. When the people of Christ are content to remain in practical distance from their Lord, this commonly becomes their condition—a condition of degradation and debasement. With her, however, it was far otherwise. A secret hand was quickly guiding her back to her place of holy rest, and she was truly willing to follow as it led. Soon, therefore, she ceased from seeking counsel of the daughters of the City, and became to *them* a testifier and a guide.

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The praises of Him whom her heart loved were in her lips, and that not feignedly. There was fervour in her recital of His excellencies—vigour in her description. It was the utterance of the heart: and although her position was not yet rectified, yet it was *being* rectified. She was not settling down into a place of practical distance from her Lord. Every thought, every expression indicated that her soul was bent on recovering the place which she had lost. Her testimony therefore was blessed. It took effect upon the souls of those that heard. And they said at last, "Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek Him with thee."

These words are indeed notable. If the daughters of Jerusalem had merely said, We will join thee, or help thee in seeking thy beloved, it might have been nothing more than the expression of a transient feeling which sudden emotion may produce on unstable fickle hearts. But in that case they would not have used the words, "O thou fairest among women." These were indeed strange words to be found in the lips of those who, when they had once before looked on this stranger, had despised her because she had known toil and travail in the vineyard, or at the folds where she had laboured for her Lord, where the sun had scorched her and the storm beaten on her. But now, although she was not only still blackened and worn, but smitten also and wounded, and her heart restless and unhappy, she nevertheless

was suddenly addressed by those who had hitherto contemned her, as the "fairest among women." Her blackness had now become comeliness in their sight: her bruises were honourable: her sufferings blessed. The eye of faith was given them. Their estimate of her was changed. They viewed her as she was viewed by Him who had now become their Lord as well as hers; for none but those who have communion of heart with Him can see honour and beauty in those whom man looks on "as the filth of the world and the off-scouring of all things." Wherever the heart's estimate is so altered as to judge *that* to be honour and beauty which before it accounted ignominy and vileness, there must have been a change wrought by the Spirit of the living God. And now grace had accomplished its object. She had been aroused, chastened, taught, and made in sorrow to learn the appointed lesson; yet even in the midst of that sorrow had been so favoured, so blessed, that when she returned to her Lord, she returned to Him with increase. Others had been won to discern His excellencies, and to seek the place in which He loved to dwell. That place she now descried: that place she again found. "My beloved," she said, "is gone down into His garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies." These spices and these lilies were not found in the City. They were *without* the gate. There she had before rejoiced in the presence and favour of Him whom her soul loved, and there she

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rejoiced in Him again: with increased apprehension of the contrast between the rest of the City, and the joys of the garden: with increased consciousness of her need of the mercy and grace of His faithful hand. Once more we find her able to say, "My beloved is mine, and I am His. He feedeth among the lilies."

May we learn the lesson. May we fear even to rest in man's City: much more may we dread to be numbered among its "watchmen." Let us go without the gate, acting *on* man's City, if we can, so as to gather out of it; but showing ourselves to be not *of* it. If the servants of Christ give themselves over to the world to subserve its purposes and forward its designs, they will find themselves at last like Samson in the hand of the Philistines—his eyes put out—his Nazarite separation lost—his distinctive strength departed, whilst that which yet remained to him was forced into the service of the stranger—the service of the enemies of the God of Israel.

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V.

Chapter VI. 10 to end.

THE great object of this Song is, as I have before observed, to mark the place (or rather that which *should* be the place) of the Church, in the midst of the earth's present darkness, whilst her Lord is absent, and herself a pilgrim. The proud City of man and the guardians thereof had no knowledge of her who ventured without the gate, trusting to the guidance of a voice that they knew not. If they thought of her at all, they thought of her only to despise. They understood neither her sorrows nor her joys. Her comeliness, that is to say, her comeliness in the eyes of her heavenly Lord, was in their sight "blackness." What honour in the estimate of the keepers of man's City could attach to one whose blackened visage was scorched by the sun and beaten by the storm; whose home and occupation was at the sheepfold, or in the vineyards, or in the distant valley where flowers and fruits of heavenly preciousness might bloom or ripen, but where nothing was found that was great, or elevated, or ennobling in the estimate of those who desired

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rather to reign as kings than to go without the camp bearing the reproach of Truth. Yet *that* was the only place in which she whose joys and sorrows are the subjects of this "Song" could find communion with her Lord. *There* she could rejoice in Him and He in her: but if from that place she wandered, she found not peace, not happiness, but chastisement and sorrow.

But although this "Song" belongs to this present night of suffering, and not to that future hour when Truth shall prosper and be exalted, yet there are in it, interspersed here and there, many allusions to that coming morning of brightness when "the day shall break, and the shadows flee away." Of this the passage before us is an example.

The words, "Who is she that LOOKETH FORTH as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" are words incapable of being applied to the Church during the present period of its humiliation. The words, "LOOKETH FORTH" imply manifestation, and to the Church in the present dispensation no *such* manifestation pertains. Whatever the Church, or any in it, may be in the eyes of Christ, or in the estimate of faith, the time for the declaration of their excellency and preciousness is not yet come. "The world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." But the moment the day of the coming dispensation dawns, and converted Israel becomes God's witness in the earth, the scene changes. The

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day of Truth's honour will have come, and Israel as being Truth's witness will of necessity share its exaltation and triumph. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God." (Isa. lxii.) Blessed words, which shall be fulfilled in their season. But they belong not to the present condition of the servants of Truth. To them a far different path has been appointed. It was never intended that *they* should reign as kings. On the contrary, they were set forth by God as persons appointed to death, who were to be, for Christ's sake, "despised," "reviled," "persecuted," "defamed," "made as the filth of the world and the off-scouring of all things." (1 Cor. iv. 9, &c.) Such was the path trodden by the apostles. It was no self-chosen course. Their sufferings were not earned by haughtiness, or self-will, or fanatical peculiarities. They resulted from simple, straightforward humble adherence to Christ and to His Truth: and therefore their sufferings were blessed. But with the apostles, we may almost say that *such* sufferings ceased. St. Paul intimated that it would be so, when he said, "I think that God hath set

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forth us the apostles *last*, as persons appointed to death." St. Paul marked with sorrow the disposition that prevailed in those around him, to reign rather than to suffer; to be *within* rather than *without* the camp. Throughout the last eighteen hundred years, few have even desired the place which the pilgrim-stranger in this Song is described as holding. They have sought after the throne far more than "the valley": influence has been purchased by the sacrifice of Truth: and the practical power of Christianity has in proportion waned.

Yet, however Christ would have rejoiced in seeing His people treading patiently the path of holy separation, it is not, and cannot be, pleasing in His sight that falsehood and iniquity should prevail, or that His people should be despised and His Truth rejected. His wisdom and grace may cause Him for a season to acquiesce in this, but it is His purpose finally that Righteousness and Truth and the servants thereof should flourish in the earth and triumph. Even then, if His Church throughout this dispensation had kept her proper place of faithful separateness, He still would have looked forward to and welcomed the approach of that hour when the place of suffering will be exchanged for one of honour, and when she who is appointed to be His new witness in the earth shall "look forth in brightness, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

But, seeing that the people of God have greatly

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failed in keeping their proper place of separateness, and have become weak in the day of conflict, we find in this an added reason why the coming day of Israel's return unto the Lord should be looked forward to, as a relief against the oppressive sense of the earth's present fruitlessness. Fruitfulness, if found anywhere, would be found in "the valley"; the place, that is, of retired humble separateness, where alone fruits ripen meet for the Lord—where alone "the vines flourish and the pomegranates bud." Such "valleys" cannot be found everywhere; nor can we create them for ourselves when and where we please. Many indeed have sought to do this. We love to choose for ourselves the spots we cultivate, and to determine for ourselves the character and limits of our separation. But "the valley" of true fruitfulness cannot thus be gained. It is a place unto which the wisdom, and Truth, and Spirit of Christ can alone guide. In seeking it the understanding and conscience must be exercised as well as the heart. There must be ability to discern Truth, and grace to follow it when discerned; otherwise, the true "valley" of blessing at the foot of the mountains of Bether (separation) will not be reached. It would be too much to say that it has been reached by *none*; for it is spoken of as a place not unknown to her whose history is set before us in this "Song." Yet her companions were few. She is evidently spoken of as one singularly isolated and alone. Few accompanied her to "the valley"; few

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joined her in watching over the vines and pomegranates that were there; and the consequence was paucity of fruit. I do not indeed say that this paucity was caused solely by the fewness of those that shared her labours. There might also have been languor in her own discouraged hand; or the blighting noxious influences of earth might have been permitted to destroy. All these causes may have concurrently operated to produce the result plainly indicated in the words that follow: "I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded. Or ever I was aware (*i.e.* suddenly) my soul set me on the chariots of my willing people." The Lord visited the valley. He does not indeed say that He found *no* fruit; but evidently He found not that which satisfied His desires, and therefore His heart turned to the future. "Suddenly my soul set me on the chariots of my willing people." His soul looked onward to the day of Israel's strength when they shall be willing in the day of His power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning—the first birth, that is, of the millennial day, when they "shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit."

And can *we* (feeble and limited as our apprehensions are) can even *we* contemplate the present condition of Christianity and not feel a certain comfort and relief in turning from it to that future hour when Truth shall no longer be successfully resisted

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by its enemies, or find its interests betrayed by the weakness and unfaithfulness of its friends? The history of Christendom throughout, from the day the apostles died on to the present hour, has been a sorrowful and evil history. The professing Gentile Church has not continued in God's goodness, and therefore, like a diseased and cankered branch, it is to be cut off from the olive tree of blessing. The reaction against the ritualistic abominations of Christendom that took place at the time of the Reformation, was an intervention of God's goodness, for which His true people praise Him and will praise Him for ever and ever: yet Protestantism, even in the days of its early vigour, was content to spare not a few of the fetters which ritualism and superstition had forged, and was tempted to forge other bonds which have fatally bound those who wear them to the thrones and potentates of earth, and not unfrequently made the true saints of God like so many Jehoshaphats following in the train of Ahab. There is indeed still some true Protestantism, and we thank God for it; but for the most part the Protestantism of the present hour is nominal merely. Some so-called Protestants, deceiving and deceived, are rushing back to the vile idolatries and superstitions of Rome; others are plunging into the black darkness of Neologian infidelity; whilst another part look calmly on with Gallio-like indifference, careless about everything save that which bears upon their interests in earth—being worship-

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pers of "human progress," and not unfrequently of Mammon.

At various periods in the history of Protestantism attempts have been made by many to emancipate themselves from restraints that have borne injuriously on their consciences; nor have such efforts been unprospered when the word of God has been really adhered to as the guide. Liberty is precious; but true holy liberty can only be gained by close subjection to the *revealed* will of God as declared in Holy Scripture.

None but the servants of Truth are really free. If not cleaving to the Truth, we are sure to be in servitude to some form of delusive error that human selfishness under Satan has constructed for the advancement of its own ends: and thus man—not God, will be our master. The present is a moment of great activity among many Christians who have set themselves free, as they say, from the restraint of human systems, that they may serve the Lord with unfettered hand. But what is more dangerous than a hand that has struck off former fetters, but refuses to submit itself to the restraining guidance of Truth? Nor is subjection to Truth the work of a moment. It is not easy for such as we, with all our ignorance and all our prejudices, to read and interpret the word of God with calm sobriety of mind. Nor is it easy in such a day as this to cleave to the faith once delivered to the saints. It is far easier to talk smooth things about love, "large-heartedness"

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and the like, and to join in the prevailing cry against creeds and confessions and "old orthodox theology," and all "stereotyped" form of doctrine; as if the Holy Spirit disowned precision, and clearness, and fixedness, and delighted in vagueness, mystification and change. The Apostle thought otherwise when he said, "We use great plainness of speech"; and when he exhorted Timothy to remember "the form of sound words," and to keep through the Holy Ghost that precious deposit of Truth which had been committed to him. Order, surely, and not confusion, should characterise the assemblies and arrangements of God's people; but this cannot be unless the word of God be rigorously applied as the test of all doctrine and all practice, and unless teachers qualified by God's own Spirit be recognised as the appointed means by which His people are to be fed with the food that is needful to their growth. If such teachers sent of God be not sought after and owned; if all the Lord's people are supposed to be occasionally, if not abidingly, "prophets"; if circumstances connected with wealth, birth, or worldly standing, are deemed to give fitness for control, or presidency, or prominence in the Church of God—what then can be expected except confusion, error, and finally, heretical departure from the faith? In Cromwell's camp it was said that there were none to be taught, because all were teachers. "It was said of Athens that you might walk through her streets, and more

readily find gods than men: it might be said of the latter years of the Commonwealth that there were almost as many sects as worshippers." This description is true, and we well know the terribleness of the reaction that followed. An hour of liberty after bondage is the very time when the closest guidance of God's Truth is needed; and *that* cannot be received by His people collectively except through His word, unfolded by persons whom He has, by His Spirit, qualified. If the saints of God individually were instructed in Holy Scripture and loved it, they would soon be able to discern who were, and who were not, fitted to be guides. They would be able to discern the ruin of the walls of Truth, and might be perhaps privileged to aid in their restoration. But in default of such knowledge, their condition must be as that of the blind or the deaf, whose wisdom, while they so continue, is to be quiet and sit still. Nehemiah welcomed the co-operation of all who were *able* to labour with him for the restoration of the walls of Jerusalem. But a necessary qualification in those who so laboured was, that they should be capable of distinguishing between "rubbish" and "stones"; or at any rate, that they should be willing to submit to the guidance of those who were able to make the needed distinction. Of this we may be very sure, that Truth alone can guide to the true "valley" of separation, or give vigour and fruitfulness to that which is planted there.

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The relations, past, present, and to come of the earth, and all things in it, whether of men individually, or of nations corporately, or of rulers, or of Israel, or of the Church, both professing and true—the relations in which all these stand to God and God to them, is abundantly revealed in Scripture: and the right knowledge of these relations is the knowledge of Truth. Yet how little is the apprehension of these things either possessed or sought after! The various lessons taught by the different dispensations that have been or are yet to be, are not learned. Even the difference between a paradisiacal earth that did *not* groan, and a fallen earth that *does* groan, is feebly recognised; and Christians (even true Christians) marvel when they are told that they are as branches or twigs, few and little, that grow on a cankered bough—a bough destined to be broken off in judgment, although in them (the twigs) God's grace has preserved life, and sap, and fruitfulness which He will not fail to acknowledge both now and in the day of glory. Few, however, understand the lesson. They know not what the branch is, nor the canker, nor the coming excision, nor that which is to follow thereon. "Ah, Lord God! they say of me, Doth he not speak parables?" were the words of the Prophet of old. The prophets and apostles would still say so if they could visit earth and witness the manner in which their testimonies respecting the future are received.

But how altered the scene when the veil shall at

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last be rent from the heart of Israel. Not only shall the light of Truth break upon their souls with a fulness and power which we Gentiles have not known, but their hearts shall be prepared not only to welcome the light, but to retain and to use it with a faithfulness and vigour that will not languish, but be maintained continuously. "The Redeemer shall come to *Zion*, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever." Is. lix. 20. "I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness; and thou shalt know the Lord." Hosea ii. 19. "The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid." *Zeph.* iii. 13. Their soul shall be as the soul of a weaned child. Ps. cxxxi. They shall lean wholly on the Lord their God, and therefore shall be as Mount *Zion* which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. Ps. cxxv. It shall be said of them, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together

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in unity." Ps. cxxxiii. Thus shall they be indeed a prepared people, fitted to have communion with the thoughts and intentions of the Lord—fitted under Him as priests to instruct, and as kings to govern all nations. They shall be "a kingdom of priests." "Men shall call them priests of the Lord, and ministers of our God. All that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed that the Lord has blessed." (Isa. lxi.)

Well therefore can we understand the reason of the call to the Shulamite (*i.e.* to the bride of Solomon) to return. "Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee." Not till the true Solomon shall appear and establish His glory in the earth, and call the daughter of Zion back to His love, and teach her to call Him Ishi (my husband) and betroth her unto Him for ever in faithfulness, and lovingkindness, and in mercy—not till then, shall the darkness that now broods over the nations depart, nor Truth have in the earth any better witness to its power than such as is supplied by the checked and hindered fruitfulness of that valley, which, even if it were rightly fruitful, would still find its fruitfulness despised. However faithfully and successfully the pilgrim-stranger might have laboured, she and her labours would still have been by men contemned.

But it shall be otherwise with the Shulamite. In her shall be seen grace and glory. The standing that she will take in the earth will be one of mani-

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fested strength and glorious power. In her shall be seen Mahanaim—*two* hosts.

"Mahanaim" was a word used by Jacob when on his return with his little band from the land of his exile, the angels of God met him. "And when Jacob saw them, he said, This is God's host: and he called the name of that place Mahanaim"—*i.e.* "two hosts." Jacob, as I have elsewhere observed,* was ever wont to magnify his own strength, and to exalt it into virtual co-equality with the strength of God. We might indeed have supposed that in beholding the might and majesty of the Host of God, Jacob would have forgotten his own little company: but he did not; for it was not the habit of Jacob to forget himself, nor anything connected with himself. He could not forget the band which he for so many years had laboured to gather; nor consent that it should stand in any other place than one of acknowledged association with the Host of heaven. Hence the word, "Mahanaim."

Yet expressions which God may permit or cause His servants to use, may conceal beneath them a meaning which they who use them apprehend not. So was it with the word "Mahanaim." It embodies a truth for which heaven and earth, in ages yet to come, will praise and magnify the God of Jacob for ever. For an hour is coming when Israel, after having been "brought very low," shall suddenly be

* See "Occasional Papers," part iv. pp. 25, 26, and "Narratives from the Old Testament," pp. 70-73, as advertised at end.

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strengthened by the Lord of hosts their God, "when I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man. And the Lord shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south." Zech. ix. 13. "And thou, O tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem . . . for I will make thine horn iron and thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth." Micah iv. 8, 13. See also Micah vii. 16. These, and many other like passages, supply abundant evidence as to Israel being made the host of the Lord *in the earth.* Yet not in dissociation from the hosts that are above. "Thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord," are words used in relation to the time of Israel's deliverance. "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." "The house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them." "The Lord shall be seen over them." The strength and glory of the host of heaven shall thus be connected with the strength of Israel in the earth; so that duplication of might, heavenly and earthly, shall mark the condition of

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the Bride of Solomon in the day of her espousals—a condition well answering to the expression which Jacob ignorantly, yet prophetically used, when he uttered the word, "Mahanaim."

From the prominence given in this passage to the Shulamite and her glory, it might almost seem as if the pilgrim-stranger, who up to that moment had been the peculiar object of the Lord's solicitude and love, were forgotten: but it was far otherwise. A glory was to be hers greater and more perfect than that which the Shulamite was *then* to inherit: I speak not now of her final destiny. She who had so long sojourned in the earth as an outcast-wanderer, was now to share her Lord's unearthly glory above the heavens. Many times during the course of her pilgrimage she had been addressed as one to whom honour and glory pertained. Although never said to "*look forth*" as the morning (for that would have implied manifestation) yet she is described as being in her Lord's estimate comparable to one who moved in solemn state and majesty in the train of a triumphant monarch: (see chap. i.) and again: "Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners"—anticipative words descriptive of a glory that she deserved, and which in due time she would receive. And now that time had come. She was to be numbered with that heavenly host, whose presence was to give to the Shulamite, one of the chief and most distinctive characteristics of her

glory. She was to constitute part of that heavenly host that was appointed to watch over the Shulamite from above, and to minister to her from that heavenly City into which flesh and blood cannot enter. She was now to join her Lord on those mountains of Bether (separation) to which on former occasions she had bid Him return until the morning should break, and the shadows flee away, and the time be come for her to share His heavenly separation. And now that time had drawn nigh. She was soon to join her Lord on the mountains of His separation, and to become His associate in that distant glory.

But what was her practical condition when thus called away unto her heavenly home? Was it one of weakness, or of strength? In another part of this "Song" we find the answer. She is described as coming up out of the wilderness as one faint and weary, leaning on the arm of her Beloved. The leaning was indeed a token of weakness: but the arm on which she leaned was almighty, and therein she had everlasting strength.

She leaned, evidently, as one very conscious that she was weak: very conscious that she was cast as a burden on the sufficiency of His faithful arm. There was no disposition to feed on the sinew of her own strength. No mention is made by her of past experiences either of sorrow, or of joy. There had been times when she had spoken of her "gardens" and her "pomegranates," her "milk"

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and her "spices," and when she had asked her Lord to come and view *with* her the scene of her labour and of their common joy. There had been times when, filled with the comfort of His love, she had besought the daughters of Jerusalem not to arouse Him as He rested with her in her lowly habitation. But it was otherwise now. Now that the termination of her wilderness sojourn had really come, and new scenes were opening before her, her soul turned not to the thought of that which she had ministered unto the Lord: she thought only of that which she needed to be ministered to her. She made no mention of *her* ministrations. The sheepfolds, the vineyards, the garden, the valley, all her labours, all her joys, and all her sorrows connected therewith, were as things of the past. To *them* she looked not for the sustainment and comfort that she needed then. She knew that her need could be met by one thing only, even by love, full, faithful, free, almighty; and she knew where to look for that love. "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm," was her language; for thy heart is faithful, and thine arm almighty. If I were to mistrust thy love—if I were to question its faithfulness, how then would the love I bear to thee become to me the source of anguish unspeakable, for "jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." But I mistrust not thy love: wholly I lean on it. I know that it is love faithful and

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true—love that "many waters cannot quench, neither can the floods drown it." It is love, too, that is free as well as faithful, flowing spontaneously from the depths of its own fulness; for how can love be purchased? "If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned." On such love she leaned: by such love she was sustained. *So* she left the wilderness: *so* she entered into her rest.

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ISRAEL

IN THE DAYS OF

HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH

WITH A NOTE UPON THE

PROPHECY OF HAGGAI.

(Both reprinted from "Occasional Papers on Scriptural Subjects.")

ALSO A LECTURE UPON

ZECHARIAH III.

BY

BENJAMIN WILLS NEWTON.

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ISRAEL IN THE DAYS OF HAGGAI AND ZECHARIAH.

WE are told by the Apostle that all that happened of old to Israel, "happened to them for ensamples, and is written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." This is true alike of the earlier and of the later periods of their history. Of all those periods there are few more interesting—few that supply more varied practical instruction than that which succeeded their return from their seventy years' captivity under Babylon—the period, as it is called, of the latter-day Prophets. It was a time of restored favour to a remnant gathered back from the land of their captivity—a time when that remnant, though few and feeble, were still sufficiently re-strengthened to maintain, in separateness from the stranger, the distinctive testimonies that had been committed to Israel. It is true indeed, that the honour, strength, and glory, that had once rested upon them, and marked them before the eyes of all men as the people of God's choice, were not restored. No Shekinah returned to their Temple: no miracles re-appeared with their Prophets. Many

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an evidence of Israel's national chastisement remained: yet notwithstanding all this, no previous period of Israel's history had opened to those who desired to serve their God, a path of service more truly honourable. The lowly labour of Zerubbabel and Joshua was not less precious, in the sight of God, than that of those who had more successfully and triumphantly borne the banner of God's Truth in former periods of Israel's history. Although it was a time of weakness—"a day of small things," yet God despised it not. "Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts."

The instruction afforded by such a period must under any circumstances be precious, because it so peculiarly evidences the grace and mercy of God, in condescending to meet the weakness and low estate of His people. But to us, such instruction should be peculiarly dear. *We* live at the close of a dispensation that has failed even more grievously than that of Israel. Who can tell the dishonour that has been done to Christ's name and Christ's Truth by professing Christendom? Men, by means of worldliness, ritualism, and idolatry, have had their hearts doubly hardened. They have become steeled against Truth and prepared for the reception of that black infidelity that is now springing up

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on every side around us. We, therefore, who live at such a period, have peculiar reason to hear with thankfulness respecting the path which grace once opened to a little remnant who, in a time of abounding weakness, caused by past failure, were again allowed to rally around the banner of God's Truth.

It may be, indeed, that the days of Ezra and Nehemiah bear more resemblance to a *past* period in our dispensation than to that in which we live. It may be, that we are nearer the end of our dispensation than they were to the end of theirs; and that we are fast approaching the time when Truth will be met only by the voice of the scoffer, and be cast down to the earth before the prospering strength of evil. But however this may be, the history of a little remnant who in a time of general failure were gathered around the Truth of God, and taught to serve Him in the separate and narrow path, will not be devoid of profitable instruction to ourselves.

The return of God's mercy to the remnant of Israel was not marked by His raising up amongst them any leader mighty in power like Moses or Joshua, or even like Barak or Jephthah. No outward signs or wonders accompanied the interference of His hand. No Elijah or Elisha appeared working miracles. God's power was indeed present, but it was so hidden that the outward eye discerned it not: it was recognized by the eye of faith alone.

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It was not intended to bring Israel back into a condition like that which they had occupied in the days of David and Solomon. The glory of God was not to return to their Temple: their national chastisement was not to cease: the yoke of their servitude to the Gentiles was not to be broken. Their faith was to be exercised, and their obedience proved in new circumstances.

The manner in which God acts towards His people whilst they continue to hold that corporate position of strength and separateness in which His hand first sets them, is not the same as when He deals with a weakened remnant whom His grace re-strengthens for His service after the former standing of corporate strength and power has been forfeited. In the latter case, the operation of His power is often hidden under secondary agencies, and instruments are employed by Him far different from those which He is accustomed to use in the day of His people's prosperity and strength.

Thus, at the period of which we speak, the person selected by God to give effect to His counsels touching His people, was Cyrus—a Gentile, the head of the second of those dynasties that had been appointed to put their yoke on the subject neck of Israel. The proposal to restore the House of God in Jerusalem originated not with Ezra, nor with any one in Israel, but with Cyrus. "Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might

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be fulfilled, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The Lord God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and He hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all His people? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is the God) which is in Jerusalem" (Ezra i. 1-3).

This indeed was strange instrumentality. It was a new thing for the Gentile to be thus used to awaken and incite Israel to the service of their God. Such had not aforetime been the agency employed by God to originate the movements intended for the blessing of His people. Yet such agency beseemed the time. It was a fitting evidence of Israel's weakness, and of Israel's fall. It was wisely appointed therefore; and this, faith recognized. It recognized the chastening: but refused not the mercy. Ezra, and others who were of faith, discerned God's hand, and, therefore, they welcomed it. They thought not of themselves. They did not selfishly and proudly say, that unless God restored to them miracle and power, and enabled them to break the yoke of the Gentile, and to raise up an independent head in Israel, they would not act. On the contrary, they thought

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not of themselves, but of God's work; and if that could be promoted (no matter what the means, if only God appointed them) they rejoiced.

Nevertheless, the line of separation which God had drawn between His people and all others, was not to be obliterated. Ezra, in obeying the call of Cyrus and welcoming his aid, did not thereby recognize Cyrus as belonging to the congregation of the Lord—much less did he own him as a ruler in God's house. He gave to Cyrus no spiritual place amongst God's people—no control over God's Truth. If, acting externally, Cyrus was willing to aid God's people without assuming any place amongst them, or fettering the freedom of their action towards God, his aid could be, and was welcomed: but on any other conditions, it would have been spurned. The stranger who was not of Israel could not be associated with the worship, or service, or spiritual government of Israel. Israel alone were God's people.

Their faithfulness to this great principle of their calling was soon put to the test. Strangers who had no part or lot amongst God's people, sought fellowship in their labours, and wished to be associated with them in building God's house. But they were instantly repelled. "Ye have nothing to do with us," said Zerubbabel and Joshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel—"Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God." If Protestant Christianity had, when simi-

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larly tried some centuries ago, exhibited similar faithfulness, we should have seen in Protestant Christendom a spectacle very different from that which we now behold.*

In the second chapter of Ezra we find the honourable record of those "whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord

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* Thus even *Zwingle*, who was in many respects in advance of many other of the chief Reformers in Scripture knowledge, "in his form of ecclesiastical government gave," Mosheim says, "an absolute and unbounded power in religious matters to the civil magistrate." This is, perhaps, somewhat too strong a statement. Yet it is almost justified; for Zwingle's own statement is—"We, the ministers of Zurich, have some time back freely admonished the council that we consent to refer to them what properly belongs to the judgment of the whole church, on no other condition than this, that in their deliberations and decrees they shall take the word of God for their guide. We have reminded them also, that they on no other terms stand in the place of the church, than as the church has hitherto voluntarily consented to receive their decrees. We proclaimed the same sentiments to the church at large; observing to them, that in times like these, when numbers are swayed by perverse affections, which they would vainly have to be taken for the suggestions of the Spirit, many things cannot be safely committed to the votes of a multitude: not that we have any apprehensions that God would desert his church, but because, while all its institutions are yet green and tender among us, the occasions of contention are to be avoided. We have recommended it, therefore, to the people to leave to the council the regulation of external matters, under the direction of the word of God; promising that, if ever we see the authority of that word likely to be disregarded, we will not fail to cry out and give them warning. To this the church has hitherto consented, not by any formal resolution, but by a peaceable and grateful acquiescence."

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which is in Jerusalem." Yet they were very few—only "forty and two thousand, three hundred and sixty," out of all the tribes of Israel. The greater part remained in the land of their captivity, preferring, apparently, the quiet and ease of Babylon to the labour and sorrows of Jerusalem. And yet, Jerusalem was God's city—its labours honourable—its sorrows blessed.

But labour, if honourable, will have its trials; and this the returning remnant soon found. Nor did their energy and faithfulness at first prove equal to the emergency. If, as soon as they had entered the land of Israel, they had immediately addicted themselves to the work for which they came; if their primary object had been the restoration of the Lord's house with such materials as His providence had placed within their reach, the work would doubtless have advanced and prospered. But instead of this, two years were allowed to pass before even the foundations were laid. Not indeed that they were altogether idle. They made preparation, yet too much apparently after the manner of Solomon in the day of Israel's greatness. It was well for Solomon to send to Tyre and Sidon for cedars of Lebanon and the like, for that was the day of Israel's collective strength and glory. Thousands and tens of thousands were then ready to labour at the bidding of Israel and Israel's king. But it was otherwise now. Costliness and splendour beseemed the days of Solomon, but they

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suited not the house that was now being builded. Its condition was to harmonize with that of the remnant who built it—and they were weak: it was to be in keeping with the general condition of Israel—and Israel had fallen.

When, at a subsequent period, Haggai was sent to admonish them, we do not find that he exhorted them to send either to Tyre or to Lebanon, but to go themselves to the mountain (that is, the mountain nearest to them, where trees fit for building were to be found) and to fell for themselves. "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it" (lowly though it be), "and I will be glorified, saith the Lord" (Haggai i. 8). Such, however, was not the principle on which they were at that time acting. Two years, as I have already said, were allowed to pass before the foundation of the house was laid.

But the day of foundation came at last, and the house was commenced amid the mingled tears and shouts of Israel. Some wept because they remembered the departed glory of the past: others shouted because of the recognition of present mercy. Both the tears and the joy were well suited to the hour. They showed a right and truthful appreciation of the circumstances. But right appreciation is not always accompanied by energy and zeal. On the contrary, the circumstances may be so dark —they may have in them such circumstances of

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discouragement as to bear upon the heart with a heaviness proportioned to the truthfulness of the appreciation, and then, nothing but God's present power can strengthen. So it was with this remnant of Israel. Circumstances of great discouragement surrounded them; and they not being sufficiently strong in faith to meet these circumstances, quailed.

The occasion of discouragement arose out of that very act of faithfulness to which I have referred—their refusal to receive into fellowship of labour those who belonged not to God's people. The desire of Satan ever is to unite, if possible, his servants with the Lord's servants in the Lord's work: for he well knows that if with the cognizance and sanction of God's people the unholy union can be effected, his devices will be sure to prosper. Christ has no concord with Belial; and therefore, when the forbidden union between believers and unbelievers is obstinately maintained, the Holy Spirit must be grieved, His strength withheld, and the evil power of nature and of Satan be in like proportion increased. When the weak and the strong are yoked together, the will of the latter is sure to prevail. The children of the Truth, ever sufficiently few and weak, have little occasion to weaken themselves more by disobedience; but when they have done this and linked themselves in unholy union to those who are many, as well as strong, can they wonder that strength and numbers should prevail?

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The remnant of Israel, however, fell not into this snare. They resisted the temptation, and refused the proffered fellowship of the alien: but their faithfulness, as might have been expected, earned for itself hatred and persecution. When Satan cannot mar by co-operation, he seeks to hinder by resistance. Accordingly, "the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building, and hired counsellors against them to frustrate." Here then was an opportunity for them to cast themselves in faith on God, and to go on with fresh vigour.

At a subsequent period when Nehemiah was with them and a like danger occurred, it only nerved Nehemiah to more vigorous effort. He cast himself on God; encouraged the people, and laboured on; with one hand building, with the other holding a weapon to resist the foe. But there was no such energy now. They laboured on indeed, but with faint and discouraged heart; and just in proportion as their courage failed, the activity of their enemies increased. It does not appear that Cyrus was applied to against them, or that he ever became their foe. But when Cyrus had died, his successors were open to receive accusations against them, and the second of these, Artaxerxes, issued formally a decree that the work should cease. The commandment was instantly obeyed. We hear neither of resistance nor remonstrance on the part of Israel. They acquiesced,

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we might almost say, gladly; and the work ceased. Thus undertakings which God originates, and which it is His resolve finally to complete, may for years be hindered; and if it were not that He is almighty as well as faithful, so as to interpose with fresh communications of strength when all seems hopeless, the sun of every fresh day of His people's effort would surely set in sorrow and in darkness.

We may marvel perhaps that the zeal of Israel should so soon have become enfeebled. But it would seem that another object had been presented to their thoughts, more interesting and attractive than building the Temple of the Lord. They desired houses for themselves. If then obstacles that seemed insurmountable debarred them from carrying on the building of the Lord's house, might they not, as released from that labour, devote their energies to building houses for themselves? The alternative was not unwelcome, and accordingly they seem without reluctance to have acquiesced in the conclusion, that the obstacles to building the House of the Lord were insurmountable, and that the work must cease. That this was the temper of their mind is evident from the subsequent words of Haggai. "This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built. . . . Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your roofed houses, and this house lie waste? Now therefore thus saith the Lord of

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Hosts; Consider your ways." It was this rebuke that at last aroused them from their slumber. But many years first passed. This prophecy of Haggai was not delivered until the second year of Darius; so that during all that long period the building of the Lord's house was altogether suspended.

Yet even during this period their condition as judged of by themselves seemed, no doubt, to possess many favourable features. It contrasted advantageously with the condition of the rest of Israel who yet remained in the land of their captivity. *They* had not lingered there. *They* had obeyed the call of the Lord, and had gathered together as His separate people. *They* had gathered, not in confusion and disorder, but under the guidance of Zerubbabel and the instruction of Joshua the High Priest. *They* had both an altar and burnt sacrifice. They "set the altar upon his bases; . . . and offered burnt offerings thereon unto the Lord, even burnt offerings morning and evening" (Ezra iii. 3). Thus there was among them the recognition of God both in respect of His government as well as His redemption. This no doubt seemed (and so it really was) a privileged condition. But when a place that the conscience recognizes as right has been attained, and attained with difficulty, we are very prone to become complacent and self-satisfied. We contrast (and so indeed we ought) our new condition with that from which we have emerged; but we might and

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should contrast it also with that which yet remains before us, and to which we ought with vigour to press on. If, at the present moment, we take, as Christians, an ostensible place of separation from the world, and maintain right moral order together with the confession of the saving power of the blood of Jesus, we are for the most part disposed to be well-satisfied with our attainment and to say, "What lack we more?" We point to our burnt-offering altar, and to our own place of separateness as gathered around it, and we are satisfied.

But we have to remember that the good and gracious desire of God touching His people is not merely to bless them with the blessings of salvation, but also to employ them here as His soldiers and servants—serving Him in His Truth; for apart from His revealed Truth we cannot serve Him. "Sanctify them through Thy Truth, Thy word is Truth." "I have no greater joy than to see my children walking in the truth." Truth as revealed in Christ, has a fulness and comprehensiveness as well as a harmony that we little appreciate, or even apprehend when first we recognize that "in Him we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." That great fact indeed is the centre from which all other truths radiate; but how many and how various are they!—all indeed, though diverse, yet connected and harmonizing one with the other, and forming a united whole needful

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to be apprehended by all who have the right expansion and comprehensiveness of faith. He would have a poor knowledge of the rainbow who was acquainted with one of its colours only; or who was acquainted with them all, but separately. He must know them in their distinctness, and know them also in their combination, if he would know aright. To know and to appreciate the value and the beauty of a costly diadem adorned with gems of manifold brilliancy and preciousness, it is needful that I should not only estimate each several gem, but that I should also consider the order and symmetry of their arrangement. If I only saw a few of the gems, or if I saw them all scattered in loose confusion, I might know something about the gems, but I should know nothing about their order, or the diadem and its beauty. Just so is it with Truth. It is as a diadem having many gems. They require to be known in their distinctness, and known also in their combination.

The Temple of Israel, designed typically to teach the great truths of redemption, affords a remarkable example of the variety and combination of which I speak. Its outer and its two inner courts, the first representing earth, the latter heaven: its various instruments of ministration extending from the brazen altar to the golden mercy-seat: the various sacrifices and offerings were all intended to shadow forth different portions of that Truth, which, though diverse in its parts,

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was yet to be presented in the unity of one Temple and of one people in that Temple, united in the service and worship of the same God. There were also the priests, the Levites, and the singers, whose various ministrations, all prescribed with the minutest care, were needful to carry out the service of the God of Israel in the appointed way: but apart from the Temple those ministrations could not be. The loss of their Temple, therefore, was to Israel the loss of their place of instruction, and service, and unity in the truth. Israel apart from their Temple were an uninstructed, unemployed people.

And such was the condition of this remnant of Israel at the time of which we speak. Unemployed in the things of God, they found their employments in constructing and roofing houses for themselves. Of all the vessels of the Temple the only one they retained, or cared to retain, was the brazen altar. The setting up of that altar did indeed mark them as worshippers of the one true God and as owning the great truth that "without shedding of blood is no remission," but it left them utterly uninstructed in those lessons respecting sin, and redemption, and the *results of* redemption, which could only be learned in the sanctuary where the golden altar of incense and the candlestick were, or in the holiest of all, where the holy ark of God's covenant rested covered by the mercy-seat, overshadowed by the cherubim of glory.

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What knowledge should we have of sin, if we viewed it merely in the light of earth, and saw it not penetrating, as it were, heaven, and there subjected to the inquisition of the purity and holiness of God? What should we know of redemption in its bearing on God's people, if we knew it not as that which also has penetrated heaven and stilled wrath for ever, and caused us to stand as before the mercy-seat in peace; there to know Him who has presented His own light instead of our darkness, and has covered us with the excellency of His own name—the true incense that has filled for us with its holy fragrance, the sanctuary of God?

But what could Israel know of these things if they had no incense and no sanctuary? They could have no "Day of Atonement." For them no priest clothed in white linen vestments could enter with blood and with incense within the vail to make reconciliation for their transgressions in holy things. They had no vail, no golden altar, no censer, no mercy-seat; and as to their defilements, they must have deadened their hearts to the apprehension of them. Even the sin-offering, one of the chief and most needed of the offerings of Israel, could be presented neither for the congregation, nor for the priests; for it was needful that the blood thereof should be brought into the sanctuary: but they had no sanctuary. Sins of ignorance, therefore, for which the sin-offering was specifically appointed,

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must have been either lightly regarded, or considered not at all. The laver too, which taught them respecting the perfect cleansing away of every thing unsuited to the purity of the sanctuary, was unknown to them. In a word, all the distinctive lessons which Israel as God's priestly people were intended to learn, were abandoned: they neither apprehended the extent of their defilements, nor the fulness and comprehensiveness of that atonement which had brought them in peace into the sanctuary arrayed, as represented by their priest, in garments of glory and beauty.

Even if under the shelter of the burnt offering altar they had become a protected people, yet they were an uninstructed, uncomforted, unemployed people—unemployed for the purposes of God. How then could they prosper? In seeking to content themselves with the burnt-offering altar alone, apart from the other vessels and services of the Temple, they were virtually rending Truth asunder and satisfying themselves with one of its fragments. Despising the instruction and order appointed by God, they were appointing for themselves what they would and what they would not know; and were directly disobeying God, for it was His will that they should restore the Temple; and they were not restoring it. His intention was after the Temple had been restored, to restore also the streets, and gates, and walls of Jerusalem; that Jerusalem might become in truth a city enclosed by its walls, and defended

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by its munitions; where Israel might display the manners of a people who had been instructed in the service and worship of His house. But if Israel refused to build His house, all His further intentions respecting their blessing were frustrated.

Can we find no counterpart to this condition in our own history? Is there no danger at the present hour, of the fulness and extent and harmony of Truth as revealed in the Scripture not being apprehended, and of the duty of becoming acquainted with it *all*, being feebly recognized? Are the contrasts, connexion, and order of Truth duly regarded? Fragmentary and disjointed portions of Truth answer not the purposes of Truth as a whole. They will not make the man of God perfect. If to Israel were committed the typical, to us the substantial testimonies of Truth, their sin in not watching over the shadows would be less than ours if we despise the substance. The Scripture is a united harmonious whole. The New Testament is not to be disjoined from the Old; nor the testimony of the Apostles to be separated from that of the Prophets. Both testify of Christ and of the designs of God in heaven and in earth that are being accomplished, or that will be accomplished, in and through Him. To be ignorant of or to neglect what God has been pleased to reveal touching these things, involves an inward disobedience of thought that will soon be followed by corresponding aberration in our practical way.

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Nor can there be any true order amongst the people of God where revealed Truth in its fulness ceases to be systematically ministered by Pastors, duly appointed by the Spirit of God, to unfold and enforce His own holy word.

We cannot wonder that in every dispensation remissness and worldliness should begin to characterize God's people as soon as they have ceased to thirst after the instruction by Him appointed. There are few more sorrowful pictures than that drawn by Haggai of the condition of the remnant of Israel, whilst they remained gathered indeed, so as to present a certain appearance of collective strength, but yet ceasing to labour for that which alone could give them strength for God, by bringing them under the regulating power of Truth. As a consequence, their hearts and their energies became absorbed in their own interests: they builded houses for themselves, and laboured to increase their own stores, but they abandoned the work of God. Holy things connected with the service of God, instead of being touched with reverend and careful hand, were rudely, and even contemptuously handled; and yet sanctifying consequences were expected to result from them, however careless the manner, or ill-timed the season of their use. But they who touch not with reverence that which is holy, will be ready to defile themselves, either in ignorance or wilfulness, with that which is unholy—deceiving themselves perhaps, or trying to deceive themselves with the vain imagination that

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holy things can be sanctified by the mere act of bringing something that is holy into temporary approximation to them. Can that which is defiled be sanctified by being outwardly touched by a thing that is holy, asked Haggai of the priests. No; answered the priests. Truth constrained them to give this answer. Yet practically Israel were acting as if it were otherwise. Holy things were irreverently handled, and unholy things were deemed to be sanctified. Remissness had led to worldliness, and worldliness to carelessness, and carelessness to deeds of evil:—"so is this people, and so is this nation before Me, saith the Lord; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer there is unclean" (Haggai ii. 14). And hence their chastisement. "I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to Me, saith the Lord" (Haggai ii. 17).

This is a solemn lesson to the people of God, especially if they seek to gather themselves together as God's people, but refuse to be patiently instructed in that Truth by which alone they can grow in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, so as to serve Him. Israel gathered as they then were, brought by their association neither honour to God, nor blessing to themselves. Union may give apparent, or it may be real strength; but it will be strength for evil if it be not employed for and guided by Truth—Truth in all the compre-

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hensiveness in which it is revealed in the Word of God. But it was otherwise with Israel then. They were not sustaining God's Truth. They had it not as their centre. It regulated not their thoughts individually, and therefore of course had no power over their corporate arrangements and order.

But Haggai the Prophet came. They heard his word, and grace was given them to obey. The voice of rebuke was then instantly changed into the voice of encouragement and promise. "From this day will I bless you."

The bright and cheering promises with which the prophecy of Haggai concludes—promises for the fulfilment of which we still wait, were confirmed and amplified by Zechariah. Zechariah stands as the Prophet of encouragement and comfort to the obedient remnant of God's people whilst labouring in the midst of the ruin of the dispensation to which they belonged. It is a prophecy, therefore, that has warnings and encouragements peculiarly suited to those who, like ourselves, live at the close of a dispensation in which, as in the case of Israel before, iniquity has strengthened itself, and the testimonies of the children of Truth waxed feeble.

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NOTE ON THE PROPHECY OF HAGGAI.

ZECHARIAH, although in one sense the cotemporary of Haggai (for they both began to prophesy in the second year of Darius*), yet was in reality his successor; for when Haggai ceased to prophesy in the ninth month of that year, Zechariah had only delivered one brief prophecy, viz., that recorded in the first six verses of the first chapter.

The first prophecy of Haggai was delivered on the first day of the sixth month of the second year of Darius. *Fourteen* years had now passed since Israel, disheartened and discouraged (*see* Ezra iv. 4), began to yield to the pressure of their enemies, and ceased from the work of the house of God (Ezra iv. 24)—a work which they had commenced, and for a season carried on with vigour and with joy. "Then stood Joshua with his sons and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together, to set forward the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, with their sons and their brethren the Levites. And when the

* That is, *sixteen* years after the decree first given by Cyrus; and fourteen years after the commencement of the opposition which caused them to abandon the further building of the Temple.

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builders laid the foundation of the Temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid" (Ezra iii. 9-11).

So the work had commenced, but at the time of which we speak—the time when Haggai began to prophesy, it had been for nearly fourteen years abandoned. During the first of this period, indeed, the work was not quite suspended. It seems languidly to have been carried on. At last, however, it was altogether relinquished—how entirely so, may be seen from the expression used in Haggai i. 4, where the Lord's house is described as being a "*waste;*" and also from the fact that when they again commenced their labours, they laid the foundation afresh (*see* Haggai iii. 18). Their former labour, therefore, could not have been great nor long continued, seeing that every trace of it had so soon disappeared.

The sad condition of listlessness, and worse than listlessness, into which they had relapsed, is strikingly shown in the commencing prophecy of Haggai. It began abruptly thus: "This people

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say, The time is not come, the time for the house of Jehovah to be built." This was the whole of the first brief message. It showed at once the ground of the Lord's controversy with them, and called on them to search out and test the reasons that had caused them to settle down into such a conclusion.

Another message quickly followed. "Then came the word of Jehovah by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your covered* houses, and this house, waste? Now therefore saith Jehovah of hosts; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith Jehovah. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I

* סְפוּנִים, literally *covered* or *roofed*. See 1 Kings vi. 9. "So he built the house and finished it; and covered the house with beams and boards of cedar." Thus they had finished and *covered in* their houses, whilst the house of the Lord had been utterly neglected. The rebuke, therefore, was not directed against their having built splendid houses (it does not appear that they had done this), nor even against their having built houses, but against their having done this whilst they were utterly neglecting the Lord's house, which should have had the first place in their thoughts.

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did blow upon it. Why? saith Jehovah of hosts. Because of Mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands."

This message of severe rebuke was not in vain. On the twenty-fourth day of the same month the people began to labour. "And Jehovah stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, . . . and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of Jehovah of Hosts, their God."

Shortly after this, on the one and twentieth day of the seventh month, a second message from the Lord was delivered through Haggai, not now in the language of upbraiding, but of encouragement and promise. It concluded thus: "For thus hath said Jehovah of hosts; Yet a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all the Gentiles, and the choicest* (*i.e.*, the noblest and

* Many have rendered these words, "the desire of all nations," and have applied them to the Messiah. It is true, indeed, that in the next dispensation Christ might fitly be called

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most select) of all the Gentiles shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts. To Me belongeth the silver, and to Me the gold, saith Jehovah of hosts. Greater shall be the glory of this house the latter (glory) than the former (glory), saith Jehovah of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith Jehovah of hosts."*

"the desire of all the Gentiles," for all will be gathered to Him then, in professed, if not real, obedience. "To him shall the gathering of the peoples be." But even if this prospective application of the words were admitted, there would be a difficulty from the word "come" being in the original in the plural number—ובאו חמדת כל־הגוים. The Septuagint, therefore, render it as above. ηξει τα εκλεκτα παντων των εθνων. See in Bengel. "Venient autem ad Christum vicissim omnes ü qui inter gentes sunt electi et desiderabiles." So also *Cocceius*, "accedent autem amati gentium,—desideratissimi gentium." A similar form of expression will be found in Isa. xxii. 7, מבחר־עמקיך "the choice of thy valleys." *See* also Exod. xv. 4.

The whole passage refers to the yet future Advent of the Lord in glory. So it is quoted by the Apostle in Heb. xii. "But now hath He promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." We have, therefore, the authority of the Apostle for saying that this verse in Haggai is unfulfilled.

*Such is the correct translation of this passage. The Temple, as being God's house, becomes thereby possessed of a characteristic oneness which would not be considered as lost if it were twenty times destroyed and rebuilt. It is always regarded as virtually one house, and therefore is called "My house," "this house," at any and every period of its history. See Ezekiel xliii. 1, 6, for the accomplishment of this promise in days yet to come. "Behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east; and His voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined

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This prophecy, however, of encouragement and promise, does not seem to have acted upon them with the same power as the previous message of rebuke. The people of God, not unfrequently, sink into a condition in which their conscience can be more easily acted on, than either their faith or their hope. In such a state, rebuke and terror can arouse them when promise and encouragement seem to be in vain. Yet activities so aroused

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with His glory. . . . And the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east . . . and, behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house."

The Septuagint translate this verse correctly—*μεγαλη εσται η δοξα του οικου τουτου η εσχατη υπερ την πρωτην.* "Great shall be the glory of this house, the last glory beyond the first." The whole passage, therefore, is to be understood, like that just quoted from Ezekiel, of the future millennial glory of Israel's Temple. "To Me belongeth the silver, &c.," that is, all the excellency and goodliness of the earth is Mine. I can, if I please, exalt and dignify My people and My Truth, and in due season I will exalt them. "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her all ye that love her . . . for thus saith the Lord, behold I will extend peace to her like a river, and *the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream*" (Isa. lxvi. 10). "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the pine tree and the box together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary, and I will make the place of My feet glorious . . . I will glorify the house of My glory" (Isa. lx. 7, 13).

But these things are future. The time for the triumph of Truth is not yet come. We have still to do with the house of wood, unadorned, inglorious, as in the days of Zerubbabel. But the words addressed to him are not without their application to us. "Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house, *and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord.*"

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have not either the vigour or the stedfastness of the energies that flow from faith, and hope, and love. If this remnant of Israel had had faith to realize that God was as truly, though not so manifestly, with them in the day of their weakness as with their forefathers when they left the land of Egypt—if they had realized that the house of wood that they were called on to build, was virtually the same house that had been, and yet again would be filled with glory, and that far more abundantly—if they had recognized that the place where they were labouring was that where God would finally gather all nations to peace, and light, and joy, and blessing, how would they have been strengthened for toil! But, as I have said, faith and hope appear to have had little power in their hearts. After the encouraging prophecy of Haggai to which I have referred, more than two months elapsed without the *foundation* of the Lord's house having been laid. In this interval Haggai did not again prophesy; but Zechariah did. His first prophecy was delivered in the eighth month; we are not told on what day. Haggai had spoken last in the seventh month.

Zechariah's first prophecy was very brief, being comprised in five verses. Its tone was stern and severe, commencing thus, "Jehovah was sore displeased with your fathers." It seems, however, to have taken effect, for on the twenty-fourth day of the succeeding month, the foundation of the Lord's

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house was a second time laid (*see* Haggai iii. 18). On that day Haggai prophesied again, twice, and for the last time. The greater part of the first prophecy of Haggai on this day was taken up with reminding them respecting the tokens of Divine displeasure that had been among them, and of the defilement brought on themselves by their carelessness and worldliness during the time that they had ceased to labour for the Lord's house. They had acted as if they had thought that holy things, however irreverently or contemptuously handled, could by the mere fact of being brought into external contact with unclean things hallow them: whilst, on the other hand, they seem to have forgotten that they who are unclean must, whatsoever they handle, spread taint and defilement by their every touch—no unimportant warning to us if ever we are tempted to believe that the mere *profession* of truth sanctifies the world and its ways; or to imagine that any thing except defilement can follow upon the action of unsanctified hands.

But although the first part of Haggai's message on this day was, like Zechariah's, severe, yet it concluded with the words, "from this day will I bless you." They had become obedient. The foundations of the house of the Lord were laid: they had begun to labour for and under Him.

His second message on this day was the last he ever delivered. It contains only words of promise. "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying,

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I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the Gentiles; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. In that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, My servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith Jehovah, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith Jehovah of hosts." Zerubbabel was the person whom God, in His grace, had appointed to be the head and leader of this remnant of Israel in this day of their weakness—this "day of small things." His place, though apparently very different from that of those who had led and directed Israel in former periods of their unity and strength, was in reality not less honourable nor less blessed. As he stood at the head of a despised and feeble people, with the plummet and measuring line in his hand, laying the foundations of a despised Temple, there was nothing that indicated to the outward eye, honour, or strength, or glory. Yet God's power and presence were there—His favour and His blessing. The stone which Zerubbabel had laid for a foundation represented in the estimate of God, and in the estimate of faith, ONE, who, when He came, was to be despised more than Zerubbabel —ONE who was to be even to Israel itself, "a stumbling stone and rock of offence," and yet to

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be that "tried foundation-stone, elect, precious," whence salvation and glory were to flow. In the Temple which that feeble remnant were building, was to be concentrated the typical testimony to Truth: there the children of faith were to wait for, and there at last to behold God's salvation. "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." Such were the words of praise and thanksgiving uttered in that Temple, when, in a manner men expected not and understood not, it was indeed entered by the Lord of Glory.

Yet whatever the honour put upon that house by God; however precious the typical lessons taught by its various courts and services to the eye of faith; those lessons were to be given, and those lessons were to be learnt in the midst of a scene in which evil was to advance with giant strides, trampling down Truth, and destroying, or else entrammelling its servants till the hour shall come for this last promise of Haggai to be fulfilled. It is a promise for which we still wait. We have not yet seen the proud power of the Gentiles cast down. Indeed, as yet it has not attained the height of its appointed greatness. It is yet to be raised up to the pinnacle of its glory, and then is suddenly to be cast down for ever.

Do our labours class with those of Zerubbabel? Are we, as guided by the voice of God's Holy Apostles and Prophets, seeking to give our energies

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to the Truth and people of God in the day of their weakness, or do we refuse to come without the gate of man's city, devoting ourselves to those things in which men find the tokens of their advancing greatness? They who follow in the steps of Zerubbabel are precious in the sight of God; their struggles and sufferings are remembered, and an hour is drawing nigh when they, and the truths and principles for which they have laboured will by Him be established in strength and in glory for evermore. But the hour of their glory will be the hour of the nations' fall. It will be the hour when that still rising fabric of human greatness, whose strength each day augments and consolidates, will sink beneath the stroke of His righteous hand, before whom at last, the earth "shall tremble and be still."

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NOTE.—The following Exposition was originally given as a Lecture on June 27th, 1858, by the late Mr. B. W. Newton, at Duke Street Chapel, Westminster, the site of which is now occupied by Government Offices. Notes which one of the hearers took down at the time were shown to Mr. Newton in 1897 by a Christian friend, who much desired that they might be published. The Author gave his consent and dictated two brief additions. The manuscript has been found amongst his papers, and it is now sent forth in the hope that it will be useful in the instruction and establishing of the Lord's people.

July, 1911.

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LECTURE UPON ZECHARIAH III.

I.

FILTHY GARMENTS.

IT is impossible for us to read the commencement of this third chapter of Zechariah without our hearts being instantly directed towards those ways of God in grace—fulness of grace—which are so precious to every heart that knows its need of being dealt with by God in sovereign grace.

Here we find one standing in "filthy garments." He could not say his garments were not filthy; they were seen in their filthiness even in the presence of the light of the Holiness of God.

And Satan was there, as the Accuser, to plead that justice should take its course, and that he who had those "filthy garments" should be judged according to the defilement of them.

What had the person clothed in those garments to say? He was silent; he attempted not to speak; he could say nothing. He could not possibly say those defiled garments were not defiled; so he was silent, as every tongue by and by will be in the presence of God. At that time, indeed, every mouth must be stopped; because then persons will be

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conscious of the light, and conscious of the darkness; and when the darkness is seen in close proximity to the light, who then will not be obliged to confess it is darkness? So Joshua did not speak.

But there was Another that spoke. It was the Lord. It was the One who had a title to condemn, that actually became the Person to justify—not to justify as though there was no right ground of condemnation, but to justify because He was pleased to act in the way of sovereign grace, saying:—"Is not this a brand plucked from the burning?" That is, have not I been pleased to pluck him from the burning, and is there any who can gainsay My will? So we see it was God that justified; He it was who said that He was pleased to consider that person and all whom he represented, as "brands plucked from the burning," and to take away the "filthy garments" from him, and clothe him with "change of raiment," and place the mitre of honour on his head. Notice carefully these gracious acts—not only is Joshua to be clothed with clean garments, but with that which is honourable in the sight of God—the "fair mitre," which gave him a title to stand with a covered head before God—the emblem that he was His consecrated servant for ever. "So they set a fair mitre upon his head."

I ask you if you can read these things without thinking primarily of the relation in which God stands to us, His justified but sinful people: for we are justified as sinners, as ungodly. Think therefore

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of that primary relation of God in which He stands to us as thus freely justifying us. I suppose that that will be the first thought produced in our minds as we read the first five verses of our chapter.

But, though all this is most true, though it is the foundation of our hopes, yet it is not the specific instruction intended. It is not the *interpretation*, but rather a natural and lawful *application*. We must notice that there is another relation in which God's justified people stand to Him, after they have been justified and forgiven and separated here to be His people. Such persons may still be found as His people with their

PRIESTLY GARMENTS DEFILED.

In our natural state as sinners, we possess no priestly garments of "glory and beauty." Think not that the relation of believers to God is the same as the relation of the world unto Him. It is, you know, altogether different. The moment we believe, we become priests—a "royal priesthood, a peculiar people"—a separate people, as Israel of old were. Now the relation of Israel to God was very different from that of the Egyptians. May not, think you, the people of God defile their priestly garments, after they have received them? Will any of you say you have never defiled them? Looking at the whole condition of Christians now on earth—true believers—belonging to the Church of God, can you say they have preserved their

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separate priestly standing on the earth? Or that the Church of God has not wandered from the place it once stood in as "the pillar and ground of Truth"? Has it not wandered into many a path of worldliness and evil? Think of the condition of Christendom this day, and do you suppose that it could be what it is, and yet that the family of faith could have preserved their priestly garments untainted?

And yet there is another place in which we can see the family of faith—where no taint can reach them—where they are above all taint: it is as they are represented by their risen Head. If you view them as represented by Christ in heaven, are they not there perfect in comeliness, excellent in beauty? Does any taint reach them there where they are represented by the Holy One whose "eyes are as a flame of fire, and feet like unto fine brass as though they burned in a furnace?" There they are spotless, there they are holy. It is no question of power, or grace, or of what they are in the Spirit, but a question of what God has made them in Christ risen.

We must look at the family of faith, then, in two ways. In Christ I see them faultless. But if I descend to the earth and consider the place practically held by them here, I am dealing with a different question. I have then to look at them as having a personal, practical sphere, in an honourable and hallowed place, a priestly place.

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It was so when the Pentecostal Church was first gathered in Jerusalem, and when subsequently the churches gathered by Paul amongst the Gentiles stood in a condition that could be represented by golden candlesticks—lamps of the sanctuary, and were recognized by God as having a practical heavenly separation unto Him even in this dark earth.

But has not this place been departed from? Can you say that the pure doctrine of Scripture has alone been maintained by the Church of the living God? Have there not been diverse sounds? Has not the trumpet given an uncertain sound? Are there not many things that are not true, not according to the truths of the Sanctuary, still found connected with the lips even of God's own people?

Now God is a God of Truth—pure, simple Truth—Light without darkness, for His testimonies are Truth; they are pure Light. "The words of Jehovah are pure words: as silver is purified seven times," without dross; and does He not put His own words in His servants' lips? But have we been faithful to His testimonies, or have we spoken things that are untrue, partly because of ignorance, and partly because we wish to please men?—although "if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."

I trust your consciences go with me in saying that the Church of God—the real, true, spiritual

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Church of God—has not preserved its priestly garments undefiled; that, in fact, it is what this little remnant of Israel, as represented by Joshua, was. God was then gathering this remnant away from the general practical condition of that age. Think of the place it was occupying in the time of what are called the latter-day Prophets, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. God was separating that remnant unto a certain practical corporate testimony which all Israel ought to have borne.

Joshua represented their priestly place in the *earth*, not in *heaven*. If he had been representing their place in heaven, his garments would have been white as the light, with no stain upon them; but not so did he represent them. He neither represented what they were naturally as sinners, nor what they were in heavenly acceptance above, but *what they were as persons who had compromised their priestly position here.*

Now I beseech you to consider whether a scene like this does not fitly represent the condition of God's true people at present in the earth. And oh! how important, how necessary to all healthfulness of soul, that this should be recognized by all God's people! What if they merely think of their heavenly acceptance above, and are altogether unmindful of the place of Truth here? Could there in that case be those practical feelings which God could approve? They would be pleased with themselves, calling darkness light, altogether ignorant

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of the manifold spots on their "garments of glory and beauty" which grace has put upon them to the end. They would be ignorant of what those spots and defilements were; and would that be healthful for their souls? Are our hearts to be exercised only about the failure that pertains to us *naturally*, and not about the failure that pertains to us as the servants and priests of the Most High? A humble, chastened, contrite heart has a great deal to do with being duly exercised in considering those things in which we have failed as the servants of God who have His separating testimonies and service committed to us here. And if we think of this as we should, what do we become in our own sight? Do we not become very vile? Do we not see many shortcomings?

So this peculiar kind of defiled garments we think not of. We think a great deal perhaps of the natural defilement of our garments, but the defilement of our priestly garments never seems to enter as an element into our consideration at all. Now, how blessed is the heart that is taught measurably to consider these things, and then to see the application of this scene in our chapter to a present condition which might through God's grace be granted to us!

GRACE.

Though this remnant of Israel had so dishonoured Him, He said that He was willing to

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forgive this. Satan said, No! these Thy servants have so defiled their garments that they cannot be forgiven. But God said, NAY, MAY I NOT EVEN WITH RESPECT TO THOSE DEFILED PRIESTLY GARMENTS ACT ON THE SAME PRINCIPLE AS I DID WITH RESPECT TO THEIR DEFILED NATURAL GARMENTS? Did I not in grace take away the defilement of those *natural* garments? And in following out the principles of the same grace may I not remove the defilement of those *priestly* garments? The principle on which I deal with them, says God, is as "brands plucked from the burning." May I not now carry out those principles and take from them those defiled priestly garments?

Is not that the principle on which God will finally act towards all His redeemed people? Will they enter into His presence by and by with defiled priestly garments? or will they appear before Him truly "in change of raiment"? You know that that is the principle on which He will then act towards all His people.

But shall we be satisfied with knowing that? Or shall we say, "Oh that I might stand before Thee here as one who practically pleases Thee, and whose relations to things around are not wrong relations"?—for *garments*, you know, are the type of *manifested relations to things around!* Shall we not desire to stand here as not sustaining wrong relations, not connected with and serving persons

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and things and principles that we ought not to be connected with; but seeking only to be associated with persons, things and principles which are acceptable in the sight of God?

Now, shall not our souls desire that? And is not God able to bring back His people to more rightness of relation to things around? We cannot say that they are in a right relation; but is not God able to put them into a more holy and truthful relation to what surrounds them? He did this to Joshua and to that little remnant of Israel whom He represented; and they were set therefore again in circumstances such as Israel had been in, in their primary separation to God, of which it is said:—"I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown" (Jeremiah ii. 2).

A CHANGE OF RAIMENT AND A FAIR MITRE.

Thus this little remnant was brought back again into a separate place of cleanness before God—a place of honour as with a mitre on their head; they were restored to a place of acceptable, well-pleasing, separate service to Him.

Oh that it might be so with ever so small a remnant in these latter days! Suppose God's truth were to gather us nearer and nearer to Himself: suppose His truth were to act more and more upon our hearts, and so bring us into more separate-

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ness of holy service, so that we should be really separated according to God's truth into His service here, *then* this character would pertain to us; then would we be clothed with fresh garments and crowned with honour. And do you not suppose that God is now thus acting by His truth on many minds? Is it not consistent with His character that He should do so now? Do you suppose that the great hour of delusion would be allowed to come on, without God's acting on the souls of some of His servants so that they should have a wall of Truth drawn around them, so that they should be indeed protected against the foe and more able to act against him with the aggressiveness of Truth? Surely it would be consistent with the character of God to think that it would be so: and I think there are tokens that He is pleased to act on some hearts thus. Shall we be indifferent to it, or shall we seek it for ourselves and others? You know very often indifferentism may act on the heart; even when the heart may be true to God at the basis, there may yet be a kind of listlessness, sometimes through hopelessness, sometimes fainting and cold—"because iniquity shall abound, the love of the greater part shall wax cold" (Matthew xxiv. 12). So we know how a kind of hopelessness may act on the soul, so as to produce indifference, a want of energy and zeal, and a virtual slumber.

Oh that there might be a love for the testi-

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monies of Truth! That is the great antagonistic power with which we are to encounter every obstacle (Psalm lx. 4). If this banner were displayed more fully some of the soldiers of Christ would cleave to it; and if in defence of that banner one of them were to die, it would be an honour to meet death with that banner in his hand, instead of any of the ensigns of the rebels. And oh that we might gather around the standard of our God! "Whatsoever things are TRUE," says the Apostle, cleave unto THEM.

II.

Thus far we have dealt with the first part of this chapter. There is yet more. Observe, then, what the promise was to this remnant. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, If thou wilt walk in My ways, and if thou wilt keep My charge, then thou shalt also judge My house, and shalt also keep My courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by."

It is a precious promise! If they were only obedient in the Truth (and grace can cause this) then they should "judge His house, and keep His courts." There seems to be a contrast here between the house and the courts. Courts belong to a great King; the house to the Father of a family; and do we not know what the family of faith is?—"the household of faith" (Gal. vi. 10).

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THE HOUSE.

Think then of this family in their relation to their heavenly Father, as given in John xiii. to xvii., when Christ taught them apart, and prayed over them that prayer recorded in John xvii. It was Jesus, as the Son, bringing them to the Father. He put the Father's name on them; He prayed to His own Father respecting them, that they might be as His children. You remember that prayer. For what believer—the feeblest of them—has not that prayer been offered? And it must be heard. There is not one of the blessings recorded in that prayer but must rest on all the family of faith.

Now suppose your apprehensions of that relation to God were deepened, would you not feel that there was a peculiar relation that pertains to the children of faith alone? You would say, "Here am I within the circle of the family of God." And you might perhaps—many souls do—so desire to dwell in that love, in the comfort of the love of that relation to God in His own family, as to shun any principle, or any thought, that seems in any wise not to be in keeping with the relation we bear to God as a heavenly Father.

THE COURTS.

But is not our heavenly Father also a great King? Does not Jesus Himself say "My God" as well as "My Father"? Does not He say, "My Father

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and your Father, My God and your God"? (John xx.) He is also God. He governs everything—the universe and the world. He has certain relations to the world. "I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts" (Malachi i. 14). So He is not only the Father of a family, but He sitteth on His throne the Judge of all things. Heaven is His throne, the earth His footstool, Jerusalem the city of the great King. And are we to be ignorant of what *these* principles are? Shall we say, "I will merely stand in the family of my Father, but I will never enter His courts as God, there to consider what He is in the courts of His government"? You may say "That is another sphere, but I like the retirement, the love and the quietness of the family; and I will not be concerned with the governmental principles of God nor with the struggles of Truth in the battlefield." But would the son of any monarch say, "I dwell in my father's house as his son, but I will never go forth and serve him in his armies; I will never serve him as my king"? Would that be a right kind of obedience? You see the Apostle John standing in the family at the close of his blessed testimony in the Gospel, but do you not also see him in the Revelation standing before God to be instructed from the throne of His government? Are you to set one of these relations against the other? or is there not a harmony between them? Are we not a sovereignty (Βασιλεία) as well as a family—

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although the sphere of that sovereignty is now spiritual and only spiritual? True indeed it is that we find ourselves in one case in the House, in the other in the Courts, but are not profitable lessons and honourable employments to be found in both?

Accordingly we are here told that employment both of thought and action should be granted, in the things of His courts as well as of His family, to those who are separated to God's priestly service in the earth. We are to hear the instruction in Daniel and Jeremiah and Ezekiel, as well as those in the Epistles of Peter, Paul and John. I have heard some say that the writings of the Prophets are not "Church Scripture." Those who teach thus, would deprive us of instruction that is important and even necessary if we would stand in the evil day.

PLACES TO WALK.

But the reception of instruction from God is not the only blessing that we need. Light is granted to us in order that it may be diffused. Make the vision plain that he who reads it may run (Hab. ii. 2) and disseminate its light to others. Diffusion of truth is the great principle of God; but this Satan resisteth. He seeks to make worldly interests and employments to be so numerous and attractive and absorbing, that no time or space should be left to the messengers of God's truth to make known

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their message or explain the object of their testimony and actions. Our garments might be garments of radiancy, glory and beauty; but how can their character be displayed in the midst of a crushing throng, whose presence renders manifestation and display impossible?

One of the greatest blessings that could be at present given to God's despised and tribulated people is, that a hearing should be secured for their precious testimonies in the midst of the world's absorbing busy-ness. A circle might be made by Almighty power in the midst of the surging multitudes that crowd at present every sphere of human action; and so a space might be provided in which the servants of God might walk up and down, and, to use typical language, display their garments—that is, display to others what their thoughts and principles, and testimonies and aspirations are. At present they whose doctrines and practices are founded on that which the Scripture from Genesis to Revelation declares, are neither heard nor apprehended except by a very few. The separated family of faith have now no place prepared for them to walk in, in the midst of them that stand by. This promise deals with that difficulty.

The figure is, therefore, that of room being made for you in a crowd that at present closes you in on every side. How blessed it would be for the servants of God if the character of their garments—that is, of their testimony—should be

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recognized by the consciences of men around! Not that it would be admired, but, probably rejected and spurned. Yet how anxious Paul was when pleading before the Roman authorities, especially Agrippa who believed the prophets—how anxious was he that the character of his testimony should be seen and known, that his doctrinal and moral position should be correctly understood. "I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee, touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews; especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently." And afterwards, when he had actually been brought before Cæsar at Rome, see how strongly he expresses his thankfulness that through God's mercy his bonds had been made manifest, in the palace and all other places, to be the bonds not of a malefactor, but bonds in Christ—that is, bonds caused by his connexion with Christ and His truth. His words rightly translated are, "I would that ye should understand, brethren, that the things concerning me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel, so that my bonds are manifest to be bonds in Christ," and not of an evil doer. Few things are more to be regretted by a servant of Christ than the misunderstanding of his character and the misrepresentation of his testimony.

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MEN OF SIGN.

The apostle's testimony was at least *understood.* But the object of all such testimony is to reach the consciences of others. It may not convince them; they may refuse to bow to it; they may even despise it. Unrecognized testimony produces no effect whatever, but that which is recognized and understood must produce some result whether it be rejected or accepted. In either case there is a measure of blessing; for even if there be rejection, it is better that the value of the testimony should be seen, and the force of the refusal of it be manifest. Therefore, in a day of carelessness like the present, when it is almost impossible to gain attention—so engrossing are the cares, riches, and pleasures that hurry every one about so rapidly—there is no quietness of mind, no leisure of thought, no desire to attend to these things—in a day (I say) like this, if God would grant places to walk in so that a priestly separateness should be *seen* and *felt*, how great would be the blessing; the Lord's servants would be "men of sign."

Now I know not whether this will be granted to us, but it was certainly proposed to Joshua and his fellows—those who shared with him this place of priestly separation. If they kept this place, thus described—walking in the Lord's ways, keeping His charge, and also judging His house, and also keeping His courts—they would be men wondered at—that is, "men of sign," men *signifying*

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certain things to those around. They would be accredited witnesses of certain Truth. Yet the context shews that their testimony would not be received. They themselves would nevertheless be a sign until the introduction of Another—"My Servant the Branch." Even supposing that this place of priestly service and this area of ministry were granted now to some, and that men did discern in them the sign-character that would guide unto God and to His principles and His Truth—and indeed the power of God is thus amongst His people to guide and strengthen them—even then, alas, the light will be rejected and despised by those who stand by, at least by the greater part. Sorrowful and sad it is, indeed, that thus it should be; yet so it will continue to the end of this dispensation, as the Lord Jesus has said.

MY SERVANT THE BRANCH.

This sorrow however is brightened by a hope. It is a promise true for Joshua and his fellows, but more true for us. "Behold I will bring forth My Servant the Branch." The presence of God's servants on the earth teaches us this lesson. Their presence is a pledge of His coming, of that great interference by God which will introduce Christ in His glory. "The Branch" is a title which always refers to that which Christ shall be when introduced in beauty, comeliness and glory (Isa. iv. 2). "In that day shall the Branch of the Lord

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be beautiful and glorious." So that the very presence of Truth in the earth, despised as it is now, may ever be looked upon as the pledge of that interference of His hand when He will bring it forth in its beauty, when Truth and the servants of it will be seen, not in reproach and rejection, but in comeliness and beauty.

It is the same Truth whether seen and heard in Christ in lowliness, or in His faithful servants, or in Himself coming in glory. What precious truth is there that has not already been introduced into the earth? But introduction is one thing, and perfect manifestation is another; yet it is the same Truth. The gospel preached to sinners is "the everlasting gospel." The fulness of blessing that is given in Christ to the church is already revealed. And we forestall all the spiritual blessings that will pertain to Israel in the day of their glory.

This very fact, therefore, of the presence of Truth in the earth now, is a sign and a pledge of what God will do when He will manifestly bring forth His Servant the Branch. In that fact lies the connexion between the present place of His servants and that future place of honour and blessing and glory into which suddenly all those servants of the Truth will be transferred the moment He returns. You find them mentioned together by way of contrast very often in Scripture, especially in the Song of Solomon, where the

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lowly position of rejection now, is compared with that of the future glory.

So then that promise of "the Branch" awaits fulfilment; and, passing over for a moment the next—that of the Stone, the two following promises are also future. "I will remove the iniquity of the land in one day" [compare Deut. xxxii. 43, "and will apply-expiation unto His land and to His people"], and "In that day shall ye call every man his neighbour under his own vine and under his own fig tree." That universality of peace we see not at present. If we could make creation bloom with the blessings of Paradise at this moment, if we could undo the curse that is on creation and cause it all to shine—yet we could not create this peace between man and man. We see, instead, a tendency to gather from the vine its clusters that they might be used for joy according to our own thoughts, and not for fruitfulness before God. But when that hour comes it will not only be joy, but the joy of sanctified hearts that know how to glorify God thereby. That, as a universal blessing, is not seen now. Then it will be seen; and that shews you the character of the joy that will be cultivated then.

THE STONE.

But, while that peaceful scene is future, there is a present blessing in verse 9, "Behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua: upon one stone

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shall be seven eyes," etc. The stone is laid, and upon it are seven eyes. Christ is that Foundation-stone. Has not that stone been laid? and is not its preciousness connected with every believer? "Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious, etc. . . . Unto you therefore which believe, that preciousness attaches" (1 Peter ii. 7). That verse tells us that the preciousness of Christ, that tried Foundation-stone, attaches to the feeblest of those who believe on Him. Surely it is a comforting verse! We know that the floods cannot overthow that Stone; it is laid by God as an everlasting foundation, and on that He hath built His Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Now, to that Stone belongs all sovereignty and power, for it is said "Upon [that] one Stone shall be seven eyes." That means the control of everything in heaven and earth; the power which from the throne of the most High God watches over and controls everything: almighty power—"the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth" (Zec. iv. 10). It has pleased the Father that in Him (Christ Jesus) should all fulness dwell (Col. i. 19; ii. 9). To Him has been given authority over all flesh (John xvii. 2), and He knew that the Father had given all things into His hands (John xiii. 3). So then all that power which is displayed in heaven, and will be soon

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displayed in the earth—all *that* is connected with Christ as the Foundation-stone despised and rejected among men. Do we doubt it? No, through grace we do not doubt it, and we know that this character of power will soon be displayed.

But are we not very deficient in faith as to trusting the present power of Christ? How often do we turn to other resources! How often that has marked the practical path of the churches! When they have found themselves in outward circumstances of difficulty, in conflict with adverse things or persons, they have turned to other help beside that power connected with the seven eyes. How often the heart turns to something that becomes as a reed in one's hand which, breaking, pierces it! There are few things in which we fail more, than in recognizing this power; we turn to resources of our own. We say, I cannot stand in my present difficulties; they overwhelm me. And so we turn to lean on something that is not simply the Arm of the Lord.

This has been more or less true of all the positions of testimony and service in the earth where we have been concerned. We have commonly rested on something that is of man, and not of the Lord; so that the peculiar power to which we ought to testify—*viz.*, that connected with "the seven eyes" and "the Stone"—is the very thing we have failed to bear witness to.

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A CANDLESTICK OF GOLD.

Now for a few moments look at chapter iv. There is a vision of millennial blessing, "Behold a candlestick all of gold." Zechariah was awakened to behold it "as a man is awakened out of his sleep" —indicating that all his energies and perceptions were suspended, that he did nothing to the attainment of that blessed end of which the vision speaks, that all was the action of the Lord simply in sovereign grace. And what was it? What was this candlestick of gold, this light of the sanctuary, that was to shine in the midst of this dark earth? It will be *thus* with Israel when they shall have turned to the Lord. They will then stand forth as witnesses for the Truth, as golden lamps of the sanctuary, fed with golden oil (v. 12).

But before that—for, as so often in Scripture, the blessing (in verses 2 and 3) is stated and partly described before the means or the antecedent events are mentioned (in verses 6 to 10)—before that, Zerubbabel stands with the plummet in his hand (v. 10), connected with a despised house and laying the foundation of a temple that is most feeble.

How contrasted, in this chapter, are those servants of God who stand as "anointed ones" by the Lord of the whole earth, with Zerubbabel in his despised condition, labouring with plummet in hand amongst a very few, poor, contemptible, and weak, who are laying the foundations of a house

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of wood. But who hath despised the day of small things? That action of Zerubbabel with the plummet was the great thing that interested Him who was the stone on which were the seven eyes. If you asked what it was that those seven eyes watched with the most interest—it was the despised position of those servants of God.

Now, may we not apply these things to the present time? Suppose there was any effort to build the stones one on another—to fit them together; for they need to be fitted together in order to be builded. What would square them so as to fit? What would remove their natural roughness? Are we not aware that the influence of Truth so acts upon the hearts of God's people? And then, in proportion as they are thus squared by His Truth, they become more fitted for their place in the spiritual temple. That is evidently what is symbolized by a person with the plummet in his hand. Suppose, then, that there should be found amongst us *now* any anxiety as to fitting the living stones of the temple into their due place by using the plummet of Truth, then that action comes under the especial sanction and surveillance of "the seven eyes." So it is not the mighty and victorious course of Joshua or David, or the glory of the throne of Solomon, that characterized that day in Israel, but this despised work of Zerubbabel as a builder with the plummet in his hand. Grace, however, asks, "Who hath despised the day of small things?"

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It is out of that character of mind displayed by Zerubbabel thus, that blessing will spring when the great hour comes for the pride of man to be abased and the principles of Zion to be exalted. It is not by mere human might, but by the action of His own power that the mighty mountain of human greatness and glory will be subverted.

Be assured that this applies quite as much to the present dispensation as it did then. There should be now this same desire so to square the spiritual stones for His house: we also can see the mountain of Babylonian pride. "Zerubbabel" means overthrowing of Babylon.* It would indeed be strange if we did not see the mountain of human greatness now before us; but it will be "overthrown." Are we, then, to take the sword against it, to put

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*[As a purely Hebrew word, Zerubbabel, with a very slight change in spelling but not in sound, would mean, *Sown in Babel*—that is, one born there, reared there. But as an Aramaic Hebrew word it has a clear and good meaning without any modifying at all. Aramaic was the Hebrew dialect that the Jews brought back in their return from the Captivity; it was repeatedly used by our Lord—*Talitha, cumi: Sabachthani*, &c.; also by the Apostle in Acts xxi. 40. In that dialect Zerubbabel means Crushing of Babel—its pulverization. Payne-Smith's Syriac Dictionary says, *Zerub* is to press, resist, squeeze, crush.

This reminds us that so early as the second year of the Captivity, Daniel had learned that the great Image would be pulverized, and carried away by the wind, while the Stone would become a great mountain and fill the whole earth. Very possibly, therefore, Zerubbabel's parents named their son thus in faith, relying upon this prophecy of Daniel ii. 44.]

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forth the hand of strength? No, we are simply to use the plummet, seeking to prepare the spiritual stones, until the power of the Lord shall come and sweep away the mountain, and manifest in glory all the despised family of faith.

That is the promise of this passage, a promise to you if you have faith to receive it. Oh that your souls may be anxious to avail themselves of this encouragement! You would then learn what should engage your interest and your energies. You would be taken away from Babylon's greatness and become connected with those labours that have great preciousness in the sight of God. Remember, I pray you, that it is the Lord that says, "Who hath despised the day of small things?" You may perhaps feel very keenly that this is such a day, and be tempted to despise it. He despises it not; and if you have the spirit of wisdom given to you, you will not despise it either. You will earnestly seek to associate yourselves with the place held by God's truth, though it may be only a Cave of Adullam; and you will earnestly desire that others of the people of God might also be sanctified thereby.

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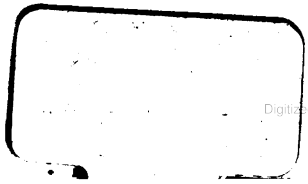
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